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ABSTRACT

This tribute to the life and times of a black American, Paul Robeson, chronicles Robeson's success as a scholar, athlete, well-known theater and film actor, singer, and model of black political activism. The document begins by tracing Robeson's family roots; childhood, high school, and college years; and the anti-black climate present in America during the Red Summer of 1919. Following a discussion of Robeson's postgraduate years spent obtaining a law degree, the document details the development of his highly successful acting and singing career and the growing political awareness that led to his later role as a human rights advocate. Throughout the document, personal narratives give readers further insight into Robeson as a person. The final section summarizes Robeson's later years and achievements and presents antecdotal salutes by well-known figures. The document concludes with suggestions for secondary level classroom activities; a bibliography, discography, and filmography; puzzles; a debate format; a brief skit, and a listening skills study sheet on the life of Paul Robeson. (LH)

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PAUL ROBESON

1898 — 1976

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL STUDIES

DIVISION OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FOREWORD

Mayor Coleman A. Young has declared the week of April 9-15, 1978, Paul Robeson Week in the City of Detroit: Dr. Arthur Jefferson, General Superintendent of Schools, is a member of the Advisory Council that is sponsoring and coordinating a number of educational activities throughout the city that week. During the week of Paul Robeson's eightieth birthday observance, there will be commemorative programs featuring actors, musicians, scholars as well as a film festival of Robeson films.

The Department of Social Studies has implemented several activities in order to help teachers learn about this great American. On February 18, 1978, over 150 teachers and administrators attended a workshop on teaching about Paul Robeson, On March 14, 1978, over 100 teachers and parents attended a film preview of **Paul Robeson: The Tallest Tree in Our Forest**. Both efforts were an overwhelming success; a number of teachers and administrators have decided to plan appropriate instructional activities in their schools.

This preliminary draft of the **Paul Robeson Bulletin** is an outgrowth of these activities. The bulletin attempts to chronicle the life and times of Paul Robeson and to illuminate the role family, school and ethnic community played in the development of his values. The bulletin also contains suggested instructional activities and school observances.

It is hoped that the information and suggested activities contained in this bulletin will help instructional personnel plan meaningful lessons and programs.

We express our appreciation to Mr. Richard T. James and Mrs. Roberta Hatten, sponsors of the African History Clubs of Detroit, for sharing some of their instructional activities; to Mrs. Catherine Blackwell, Region Five, Black Studies Coordinator; and Dr. Charles Wright, author of **Paul Robeson: Labor's Forgotten Champion**, for sharing their research with us. We also wish to express our appreciation to Mrs. Delores Minor, Assistant to the General Superintendent, and Mr. Charles Alexander for their editorial assistance, and to Mrs. Hattye Shelby and Mrs. Eleonore Kanka for their expert secretarial assistance.

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In April, 1944, Mrs. Mary McCleod Bethune, our famous educator, was invited to New York to appear as a speaker at the celebration of Paul Robeson's 46th birthday. The Council of African Affairs, of which Paul was co-founder, in 1937, was host to this celebration. It was at this historic occasion that Mrs. Bethune called Paul Robeson "... the tallest tree in our forest."

OUR TREE

Mrs. Bethune looked up one day,
And saw a mighty Tree.
The branches reached for heaven
And the roots were planted deep.

Her Tree was a haven for weary ones
Who journeyed far and long,
And came upon ill-winds that blew
And sought to mute their song.

Here they could rest and draw their strength,
Before going on their way,
And leave her Tree to carry on,
Without "Thank You" to say.

Her Tree just stood so straight and tall
And took it all in stride,
As if to say to all the world,
"I'm Here, and here I'll bide"!

She looked at its roots—she could not see
They'd been growing since their youth.
"These roots," she said, "how deep they are,
And anchored so in truth."

She looked at her Tree and pondered
The many storms it had been through.
And how It stood and weathered them,
Choosing little else to do.

Yes, Mrs. Bethune looked up one day,
And saw a Tree so tall.
"... Our tallest Tree," she whispered soft,
"Is one whose name is Paul."

—Tal James

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ROOTS

Like most black Americans, Robeson's roots are buried deep in the American past but he was very fortunate in that he knew them. His mother, Maria Louisa Bustill Robeson, was born in Philadelphia in 1853. The Bustill family went back to the earliest days of America. The blood of blacks, Indians, and white Quakers ran through their veins. Her great grandfather, Cyrus Bustill, was a free black man in America during the American Revolution and baked bread for General Washington's troops at Valley Forge. In 1787, Cyrus Bustill along with Richard Allen and Absalom Jones founded the Free African Society in Philadelphia. This society was one of the first mutual aid societies for blacks in America.

Mrs. Robeson's grandfather, Joseph C. Bustill, taught at the school located in Philadelphia's colored Presbyterian Church. He also helped organize a Fugitive Aid Society which unlawfully helped fugitive slaves to "make free" when they crossed the border into Pennsylvania. His exploits were recorded in William Still's seminal book, **The Underground Railroad**. This tradition of service was kept alive and transmitted to their young through annual family reunions.

On Paul Robeson's paternal side, his roots are less well known because the black Robesons of North Carolina were slaves. His father, William Drew Robeson, was born on a plantation in Martin County, North Carolina in 1845, but in 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, he escaped. This former bondsman was not satisfied with acquiring physical freedom. He sought freedom of the mind as well and worked his way through Pennsylvania's Lincoln University and became a Presbyterian minister.

In 1876, Reverend William D. Robeson married a Philadelphia school teacher named Maria Louisa Bustill. His first pastorate was a black Presbyterian Church in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. His next charge was the Presbyterian Church in Princeton, New Jersey, and it was there that Paul Leroy Robeson was born on April 9, 1898.

CHILDHOOD

Paul was the youngest of the Robeson siblings. When he was born, William was 17 years old, Reeve was 12, Benjamin was 6 and Marion, his only sister, was 4. The family was not rich in worldly goods but they were exceedingly weathly in the things of the spirit such as dignity, motivation, concern for one's fellow human being and loyalty to one's convictions.

According to his youngest son, Reverend Robeson was a man of average height with extremely broad shoulders and a physical presence that "reflected the rock-like strength and dignity of his character." Reverend Robeson possessed a magnificent speaking voice that "was a deep sonorous basso, richly melodic and refined, vibrant with love and compassion and compassion which filled him ... It was not like him to be demonstrative in his love nor was he quick to praise. Doing the right thing — well, that was something to be taken for granted in his children."

Paul did not remember his mother well because he was only six years old when she died. Mrs. Robeson was an invalid and nearly blind from cataracts, and was tragically killed in a household fire. His family members of the black community kept her memory alive and ever before him. He was told that she had a "remarkable intellect, her strength of character and spirit which contributed so much ... to his father's development and work. She was a companion to him in his studies; she helped compose his sermons; she was his right hand in all his community work ... she moved, so strong and tender, in their midst — comforting the sick, mothering the orphaned, collecting food and clothing for the hungry and ragged, opening to many the wonders of book learning."

This tragedy of his mother's death was not as devastating to Paul as it might have been because his family and the extended family of Princeton's black community moved in to fill the void:

> There must have been moments when I felt the sorrows of a motherless child, but what I most remember from my youngest days was an abiding sense of comfort and security. I got plenty of mothering not only from Pop and my brothers and sister when they were home, but from the whole of our close-knit community. Across the street and down each block were all my aunts and uncles and cousins — including some who were not actual relatives at all. So, if I were to try to put down the names of all the folks who helped raise me, it would read like a roster of Negro Princeton. In a way I was "adopted" by all these good people and there was always a place at their table and a place in a bed (often with two or three other young ones) for Reverend Robeson's boy when my father was away on one of his trips to the seashore or attending a Church conference.[1]

During the time that Paul Robeson was growing up in Princeton, the city and its institutions, though Northern by geographical definition, spoke in a drawling, Southern accent and erected rigid social barriers between white and black people. In those days, black students could not attend Princeton University. Public schools and housing were segregated. Members of its black community were tolerated because they were needed as domestic workers in the homes of the wealthy and well-to-do and as waiters and dishwashers at the university.

Young Paul attended a segregated elementary school. He was a good child but far from an angel. His father gave his teachers permission to use corporal punishment if necessary and on several occasions it was necessary. Reverend Robeson expected all of his children to do the right thing. When Paul came home from school, he knew he must do his household duties and make time for study as well as play. He yielded quite easily to his father's quiet discipline.

The Robeson family contributed a great deal toward young Paul's education. He did not have a problem of negative self image. Although equality was denied him, Paul Robeson knew that he was not inferior.

> How proudly, as a boy, I walked at his side, my hand in his, as he moved among the people! There was a wide gap in years between us—he was fifty-three when I was born, near sixty when my mother died—but during many of his years as a widower I was the only child at home and his devoted care and attention bound us closely together ... I knew what I must do—when to come home from play, my duties in the household, my time for study—and I readily yielded to his quiet discipline ... Then there were the winter evenings at home with Pop: He loved to play checkers and so we two would sit for hours in the parlor, engrossed in our game, not speaking much but wonderfully happy together.[2]

Shortly after his wife's death, Reverend Robeson sent the older children away to school. Benjamin was sent to a prep school and then to Johnson C. Smith College in North Carolina. Marion was also sent to school in North Carolina. She attended a prep school for girls called Scotia Seminary. Bill, the eldest, attended his father's **Alma Mater**, Lincoln University. Although the others occasionally came home on vacation, it was Reeve, the "roughneck," who stayed at home, that had a major influence upon him.

From Reeve young Paul learned how to deal with racial insults and abuse. "Don't ever take low, was the lesson Reeve taught me. Stand up to them and hit back harder than they hit you." Because of this militant approach to problem solving, Reeve was constantly in trouble. Finally, Reverend Robeson asked him to leave home because he was setting a dangerous example for his younger brother. In spite of his father's intervention, Paul had learned his lessons well.

When William came home from college, he taught Paul how to play football:

> Because I was younger, my own days at Princeton were happier ones. Mostly I played. There were the vacant lots for ball games, and the wonderful moments when Bill, vacationing from college where he played on the team, would teach me how to play football. He was my first coach, and over and over again on a weed-grown lot he would put me through the paces—how to tackle a man so he stayed tackled, how to run with the ball.[3]

In 1907, Reverend Robeson changed denominations and became a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. During that same year, he moved to Westfield, New Jersey and founded the Downing Street A.M.E. Zion Church. Westfield was a smaller community and segregation was less rigid. There were not enough black children in the town to have a segregated school system. Years later Robeson made the following comparison of those towns:

> Westfield, and later Somerville, were quite unlike Princeton. Barriers between Negro and white existed, of course, but they were not so rigid; and in the ordinary way of small-town life there were more friendly connections between the two groups. And here there were white workingmen, too, many of them foreign-born, who, unlike the Princeton blue-bloods, could see in a workingman of a darker skin a fellow human being (a lower-paid worker of course, and perhaps a competitor for a job, but not a person of a totally different caste).
>
> In these towns I came to know more white people. I frequently visited the homes of my schoolmates and always received a friendly welcome. I wasn't conscious of it at the time, but now I realize that my easy moving between the two racial communities was rather exceptional. For one thing, I was the respected preacher's son, and then, too, I was popular with the other boys and girls because of my skill at sports and studies, and because I was always ready to share in their larks and fun-making.[4]

In 1910, Reverend Robeson moved to Somerville, New Jersey in order to serve as the pastor of St. Thomas A.M.E. Zion Church. Somerville was a larger town midway between Princeton and Westfield. And like Princeton, it had a separate elementary school for blacks. Young Paul only attended the elementary school for one year and graduated number one in his class. This must have pleased him to receive the plaudits of the crowd, but he knew that he was merely living up to his father's expectations.

> Pop was pleased by that, I guess, though it was only what he expected of me and his attitude never allowed for feelings of exaggerated self-esteem.
>
> I have often told how he was never satisfied with a school mark of 95 when 100 was possible. But this was not because he made a fetish of perfection. Rather it was that the concept of **personal integrity**, which was his ruling passion, included inseparably the idea of maximum human fulfillment. Success in life was not to be measured in terms of money and personal advancement, but rather the goal must be the richest and highest development of one's own potential.
>
> A love for learning, a ceaseless quest for truth in all its fullness—this my father taught. His own schooling had been along the classic pattern which today has been largely displaced by an emphasis on technology. I do not know, in political terms, what stand my father took in the debate then raging in Negro life between the militant policy of W. E. B. DuBois and the conservative preachments of Booker T. Washington—that clash of opposing ideas as to the path for Negro progress which was so largely expressed in terms of educational goals. But in practice Reverend Robeson flatly rejected Washington's concept that Negro education be limited essentially to manual training; he firmly believed that the heights of knowledge must be scaled by the freedom-seeker. Latin, Greek, philosophy, history, literature—all the treasures of learning must be the Negro's heritage as well.[5]

In 1911, Paul Robeson moved on to Somerville High School. Here he would make new friends and meet new challenges. He was well aware that this experience was not only a new testing ground but also important preparation for college. Young Robeson also knew that he was not alone—Pop, William, Benjamin, and Marion were there to offer aid and comfort.

THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS

Somerville High School was not segregated. Young Robeson was a member of the school glee club and dramatic club. Miss Vosseler, the music teacher, worked assiduously to train his voice and Miss Anna Miller closely supervised his development as a speaker and debater. She was the first person to introduce him to the works of Shakespeare. Although it would not have been possible for a black man to play Othello on the American stage at this juncture of American history, it was performed at Somerville High School and Paul played the leading role. Years later Robeson commented about his initial experience as an actor:

> Anna Miller ... paid close attention to my development as a speaker and debater; and it was she who first introduced me to Shakespeare's works. Many years were to pass before the American theatre would permit a Negro to play Othello, but the idea seemed eminently right to Miss Miller as she coached me in the part for a high-school dramatic performance. Nervous and scared, I struggled through the lines on that solemn occasion (mindful of my father's ear for perfect diction and my teacher's patient direction) and no one in the world could have convinced me then that I should ever try acting again.[6]

Paul Robeson's high school education was based upon the classical tradition of Latin, Greek, English literature, chemistry and physics. His most critical instructor, however, was his father:

> So for me in high school there would be four years of Latin and then in college four more years of Latin and Greek. Closely my father watched my studies, and was with me page by page through Virgil and Homer and the other classics in which he was well grounded. He was my first teacher in public speaking, and long before my days as class orator and college debater there were the evenings of recitations at home, where his love for the eloquent and meaningful word and his insistence on purity of diction made their impress.[7]

THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS (Continued)

Young Robeson was "accepted" if not indeed lionized by his white classmates and teachers at Somerville High School. He performed admirably in the classroom; he was a football hero; and was a star in the performing arts. Paul had a number of close friendships with white students. His Latin teacher, Miss Vandeveer, seemed to be relatively free of racism and his chemistry and physics teacher, Miss Bagg, made every effort to involve him in the social life of the school. Miss Bagg also served as the activities coordinator and urged him to attend social gatherings at the school. When occasionally and reluctantly he did attend these affairs, she was usually the first to dance with him. Young Robeson did appreciate these attempts to include him in these activities but he was ever conscious of the "twoness" in American society. He expressed this thought in the following manner:

> I shied away from most of these social affairs. There was always the feeling that—well, something unpleasant might happen; for the two worlds of white and Negro were nowhere more separate than in social life. Though I might visit the homes of white classmates, I was always conscious that I belonged to the Negro community.
>
> From an early age I had come to accept and follow a certain protective tactic of Negro life in America, and I did not fully break with the pattern until many years later. Even while demonstrating that he is really equal (and, strangely, the proof must be superior performance!) the Negro must never appear to be challenging white superiority. Climb up if you can—but don't act "uppity." Always show that you are **grateful**. (Even if what you have gained has been wrested, from unwilling powers, be sure to be grateful lest "they" take it all away.) Above all, **do nothing to give them cause to fear you**, for then the oppressing hand, which might at times ease up a little, will surely become a fist to knock you down again!
>
> Well, as a boy in high school I tried my best to "act right." I would make the best of my opportunities. I would measure myself only against my own potential and not see myself in competition with anyone else. Certainly I had no idea of challenging the way things were. But courtesy and restraint did not shield me from all hostility.[8]

THE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS (Continued)

Most of the hostility towards Young Robeson came from the principal, Dr. Ackerman, who seemed to never speak to him except to deliver a reprimand. When Miss Vosseller made him the soloist of the glee club, she did so over Dr. Ackerman's strong opposition. It was Paul's view that Dr. Ackerman's "sharp words were meant to make me feel as miserably inferior as he thought a Negro was." In spite of the Dr. Ackerman's of Somerville, Paul Robeson was able to survive and succeed because he had God-given talent and a supportive family.

His brother Ben inspired Paul's avid interest in sports. Ben was his favorite brother because he was closer to him in age and was in college while he was in high school. Ben was the first individual to take him beyond small-town life in New Jersey. When he was 14 years old, Ben took him along with him to work at a wealthy summer resort in Narragansett, Rhode Island. Ben was a waiter and Paul worked in the kitchen. As a kitchen boy, he worked from 4:00 a.m. until late in the evening. This was a seminal experience in many ways but the most important benefit was that he had an opportunity to meet and observe other role models. These black student workers at Narragansett Pier were to become a virtual who's who in black America.

Long before his senior year, the family had decided that he would carry on the Robeson tradition by attending Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. Both his father and William had graduated from there. During his senior year, however, he discovered that there was a three-hour competitive examination which was open to high school students in New Jersey. A four-year scholarship to Rutgers University was the prize.

The Robesons knew about Rutgers College: that it was only 15 miles away from Somerville and that it was a private college founded in 1766 by the Dutch Reformed Church. This church still exercised a great deal of influence over the college in those days.

Thus it was one of the oldest colleges in America and rather exclusive. In the history of the institution, however, only two blacks had ever gone there and none within recent years.

The family decided that Paul should compete because the four-year scholarship was worth the effort. This was an important undertaking because Paul had not known about the preliminary examination the previous year which was based upon the first three years of high school courses. Paul, "was faced with an examination embracing the entire four-year course, in the same three-hour period during which the other competitors would cover only their senior year's work." Paul developed a study plan and gave it his maximum effort. He was also motivated by the well wishes of his classmates and teachers as well as the ill will of Dr. Ackerman. The most important reason was, "Pop's quiet confidence had to be justified."

Reverend Robeson's confidence was not misplaced; Paul won the scholarship! Of the 600 students who took the test, he was first and this became a significant event in his life.

> That I would go to Rutgers was the least of it, for I was sure I'd be happier at Lincoln. The important thing was this: Deep in my heart from that day on was a conviction which none of the Ackermans of America would ever be able to shake. Equality might be denied, but I knew I was not inferior.[9]

Paul's next challenge was the state-wide oratorical contest for high school students, but this time he did not win the top prize. First prize was won by a black student named Hilmar Jensen, who was also the son of a minister, and second place was won by a white student, a young woman whose name Robeson did not remember. Paul won third place in this contest and his choice of oration may have contributed to the judge's decision.

For this contest, Paul selected Wendell Phillips' "Oration on Toussaint L'Ouverture." This oration was declaimed by the old freedom fighter during the first year of the Civil War. This eulogy was an attack upon the concept of white supremacy. At seventeen, Paul, despite his wisdom, was not completely aware of the nuances and implications of the piece. "On that Occasion," he noted, "I paid tribute only to his powers of rhetoric."

It does not take much imagination for one to realize that this seventeen year old in his way had done much to minimize the concept of white supremacy in that corner of the world called Somerville, New Jersey. As he prepared to enter college, he had seemed to have his eyes on the sparrow and his goals in view.

> ... that fall of 1915 ... I entered college to learn more Latin and Greek, more Physics and Math, more History which included neither Toussaint nor Phillips — and to play a little more football, too. As I went out into life, one thing loomed above all else: I was my father's son, a Negro in America. That was the challenge.[10]

COLLEGE YEARS

Paul Leroy Robeson was the third black student to attend Rutgers College and from his freshman year in 1915 to his senior year in 1919, he was the only black there. From all accounts, he performed very well in the lecture halls and at the completion of his freshman year, he had earned seven A's and one B. It was upon the playing field of Rutgers, however, that he experienced difficulty.

> I was 17 years old when that happened and had gone down from Princeton, where I grew up, to Rutgers. I was a freshman trying to make the football team. Rutgers had a great team that year, but the boys—well—they didn't want a Negro on their team, they just didn't want me on it.
>
> Later, they became my friends, but every word of this is true, and though they are my friends I think they won't mind me telling it. On the first day of scrimmage they set about making sure that I wouldn't get on their team. One boy slugged me in the face and smashed my nose, just smashed it. That's been a trouble to me as a singer everyday since. And then when I was down, flat on my back, another boy got me with his knee, just came over and fell on me. He managed to dislocate my right shoulder.
>
> Well, that night I was a very, very sorry boy. Broken nose, shoulder thrown out, and plenty of other cuts and bruises. I didn't know whether I could take any more. Seventeen years old, it was tough going for that age. But my father had impressed upon me that when I was out on a football field or in a classroom or anywhere else I wasn't there just on my own. I was the representative of a lot of Negro boys who wanted to play football and wanted to go to college, and, as their representative, I had to show that I could take whatever was handed out.
>
> Well, I didn't know, my brother came to see me, and he said, "Kid, I know what it is, I went through it at Pennsylvania. If you want to quit school go ahead, but I wouldn't like to think, and our father wouldn't like to think that our family had a quitter in it."
>
> So I stayed. I had ten days in bed, a few days at the training table and then out for another scrimmage. I made a tackle and was on the ground, my right hand palm down on the

> ground. A boy came over and stepped, hard, on my hand. He meant to break the bones. The bones held but his cleats took every single one of the finger nails off my right hand! That's when I knew rage!
>
> Th next play came around my end, the whole first string backfield came at me. I swept out my arms—like this—and the three men running interference went down ... The ball carrier was a first-class back named Kelly. I wanted to kill him, and I meant to kill him. It wasn't just a feeling, to kill. I got Kelly in my two hands and I was going to smash him so hard to the ground that I'd break him right in two, and I could have done it. But just then the coach yelled, the first thing came to his mind, he yelled: "Robey you're on the varsity!"[11]

Soon "Robey" became one of the boys. He had made his point, his teammates knew that he would not be pushed around. In a larger sense, the incidents on Neilson Field illustrated a number of things about Robeson. First of all, it showed that his father's sense of high principles and Christian values had taken hold and he was willing to forgive. Secondly, it illustrated Paul's great virtue of evaluating people solely upon their individual merits.

After the initial harassment Robey played well and received some recognition. The "Rutgers Daily Targum" noted that, "This was the beginning of an athletic career without equal." During his sophomore year, the "New Brunswick Daily Home News" reported, "The only medium resulting in any substantial gain was forward passing engineered by Kelly and received by Robeson." In 1917, Robeson was elected to Rutgers Football Honor Roll. The Citation read:

> Robeson is the first of all ends. The leading strategists were unanimous in according this place to "Robey!" The **New York Sun** writes "With the rise of Rutgers this season, Robeson with his superb strength augmented by a knowledge of both the theory and practice of the finer points of football soon proved himself one of the best forwards in the country." He not only met all the requirements of a first rate end, but also he proved a most valuable asset to the team as a defensive back.[12]

The 1917 football season had its zenith and nadir. The summit was reached when Rutgers played Cupid Black's Naval Reserve Team at Ebbets Field in Brooklyn. This team had a number of All American players on it. The team included Barrett of Cornell, Gerrish of Dartmouth, Schlachter of Syracuse, Callahan from Yale and stars from other football powerhouses of that day. In addition to this array of talent, the team was coached by Dr. Bull, a famous coach at Yale.

This Naval Reserve team had sunk every team they had played. They had torpedoed Main 39 - 0 and Brown 35 - 0. To the media and fans, they were unbeatable. Everyone expected them to demolish Rutgers, but Rutgers pulled an upset and won 14 - 0. Sports writers had a Roman holiday in print. Their purple prose ran amuck.

> A tall, tapering Negro in a faded crimson sweater, a blaze of red and black, a veritable Othello of battle, who played left-end on the Rutgers team and saw to it that in forty-four minutes of play the Naval Reserve aggregation made exactly two first downs. A grim, silent and compelling figure, the Negro met every offensive play and stopped it, whether it was led by Charlie Barrett of Cornell an All-American fame, by Gerrish or by Gardner. He was everywhere, seldom playing in his own position, opening up holes for his backs, providing interferences, handling forward passes, tackling, diagnosing plays, and getting quickly to danger points. His ability to look ahead in a game was uncanny; not a manoeuvre but he saw it in advance, not a play but he was in it. He carried the ball only once, but then it was from receiving a faultless forward pass, and he went over the line for a touchdown. His main job was drilling holes for his backs, and if ever a backfield was presented with a fine, clear avenue of daylight, it was that of Rutgers following in the wake of Robeson's carving.
>
> The newspapers called him the "rover." He seemed to have carte blanche to wander over the field at will, and at the same time he managed to be in the precise center of every play ... There are two types of successful football men. One plays with a smashing, bulldog singleness of purpose. His mind is set on the line behind the goalposts; he clinches the ball

> under his arm, set his jaw, and woe betide any tackler that gets in his way. The other is the strategist. He plays the game with his mind as well as with his muscles. He looks ahead and anticipates manoeuvres, and sees the weak spot, just before, not just after, the opposing team breaks through ...
>
> Robeson belonged to the latter class. Six feet three inches in height, two hundred pounds in weight, possessed of a phenomenal length of arm—these things alone would have made him a player above the average; but he had a football genius's brain. And the combination has only once or twice been equalled in the whole history of the gridiron. He was universally chosen All-American End for 1918. Men like Walter Camp and Louis Lee Arms said he was the greatest player of the year. Some even said he was the greatest player that ever chased a football.[13]

The nadir occurred when Rutgers played Washington and Lee. The Virginia Institution refused to play Rutgers if Robeson played. Rutgers was faced with the dilemma of whether to refuse to play Washington and Lee or to bench Robeson. They made the decision to bench "good ole Robey" and "good ole" Rutgers remained faithful to their racist tradition. The compromise was in vain because Rutgers failed to win and had to settle for a 13 - 13 tie.

There was some protest by the student body, but the real protest came from black Americans. They were outraged! There seems to be no record of how Paul Robeson felt about this incident.

Two years later when he was preparing to graduate from college, James Carr, Rutgers' first black graduate, class of 1892, having just heard of the incident, wrote the following letter to President William H. S. Demarest, denouncing the university for its racist stand. Carr, an attorney for the City of New York, stated that Rutgers had "Prostituted her sacred principles—when they were brazenly challenged, and laid her convictions upon the

altar of compromise ... shall men, whose progenitors tried to destroy this union, be permitted to make a mockery of our democratic ideals by robbing a youth, whose progenitors helped to save the Union, of that equality of opportunity and privilege that should be the crowning glory of our institutions of learning." Carr was deeply moved by this injustice and concluded, "Not only he, individually, but his race as well, was deprived of the opportunity of showing its athletic ability, and perhaps, its athletic superiority."

In 1917, Walter Camp, the dean of American sports writers of that era, selected Robeson for his All-American team. Walter Camp's team was regarded as most selective if not official one. Robey was the third black man to receive this honor. The others were William H. Lewis of Harvard, selected in 1892 and 1893, and Fritz Pollard of Brown University, selected in 1916. Robey was honored again in 1919. It was a distinct honor for him and Rutgers because Rutgers had been playing the game of football since November 1869, when appearing against Princeton in the first intercollegiate football game. Despite this historical advantage, Rutgers had never had an All-American. Robeson, the son of a former slave, was its first.

Robeson participated in three other sports at Rutgers and starred in all of them. By the time Robey graduated, he had won thirteen varsity letters, four in football, three in basketball, three in baseball and three in track. Robey was the catcher on the baseball team; and on the basketball team he usually played guard, but he also played center and forward when needed. He was, however, one of the leading basketball players in the east. On the track team, he pushed the shot, hurled the javelin and threw the discus.

COLLEGE YEARS (Continued)

Throughout his four years at Rutgers, Robeson had received the plaudits of the student body and the "townies" of New Brunswick. In his senior year, they acted as if there was a contest to see who could praise him the most. They even acknowledged his greatness in poetry and song.

> All hats off to "Robey" men; all honor to his name; on the diamond court or football field he's brought old Rutgers fame.[14]

Robeson was very newsworthy. Stories about him were always in the local press.

> Our own "Robey." As a football man he stands out as the best in the country today. As a receiver of forward passes he stood out head and shoulders above all others. As defensive quarter-back he is in a class by himself. His greatest compliment comes from Coach Sanford, who says he is the greatest player of all times. When "Robey" hit them, they stopped coming. And there are eight teams in the country which will tell you the same. He has been picked as the leading player in the country and as All-American end by practically every football authority throughout the east. As everybody knows "Robey," you're there.[15]

Even the staid **New York Times** commented upon his college career.

> One of the greatest all around athletes developed in recent years will be lost to collegiate sports when Paul Robeson, the giant Negro, closes his term at Rutgers this month.
>
> Throughout the years spent at Rutgers, Robeson has been a star among college athletes. For the past two years he has been, perhaps, the greatest player in collegiate football, while he has won points with the weights consistently, a match for the best in basketball and a real Varsity man in baseball.[16]

Through it all Robeson accepted their accolades with genuine modesty. He remained as unassuming, and kind as ever. Robey was a champion with class. In 1932 he told a reporter:

> My friends said a lot of silly things ... You know this business of Negro prejudice has two sides. When people hate you they go crazy. But when they like you, they sometimes go a little crazy too. In football days I got more praise than any white player. And I was credited with a lot of plays I never made ... So it is with many white folks when they first "discover" a Negro.[17]

Robeson was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year, and a year later he was elected to Cap and Skull, an exclusive honor society for seniors. In addition to his membership in Phi Beta Kappa and Cap and Skull, this athlete-scholar belonged to the Student Council and Philoclean Literary Society. Robey's only disappointment at Rutgers was that he was not allowed to join the glee club. Over the years, in his personal narrative, **Here I Stand**, and in interviews, he had mentioned the fact.

Another source of annoyance was discrimination in campus housing. It was Robey this and Robey that but when it came to living in a dormitory on campus it was Robey no! Of course, this was a common practice at northern universities as late as the nineteen fifties. Robey found accommodations with Mrs. Cummings and her family on Morrill Street and they helped to make him an integral part of New Brunswick's black community.

This policy of social exclusion made it impossible for him to become a member of the fraternities on campus, but it is doubtful that this item was even on his agenda. He did, however, join the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity at his father's alma mater. Alpha Phi Alpha was the first Greek letter fraternity established by blacks in 1906.

Being his father's son, it was ordained that Paul should contine with public speaking and debate. He won "first prize in every speaking competition at college for which he was eligible." This included the Freshman Prize in Oratory, first prize in the sophomore Extemporaneous Competition, first prize in third Year Extemporaneous Competition,

and, in his senior year, he won the highly esteemed Ann Van Nest Bussing Prize in extempore speaking.

As the leader of the debate team, Robey led them to a number of victories. This activity was rewarding because it enabled him to meet and interact with some of the best minds from other colleges. Debating also provided him with a forum for approaching an issue from a black perspective. Robeson believed that debating was an opportunity to change minds and influence behavior. His **raison d'etre** was to oppose racism in American society.

All of his speaking in some way or another was to provide data about social and political forces that hindered the advancement of his race. These speeches provided reasons for positive social change and social justice. His speech, for example, on **Loyalty and the American Negro**, focused upon the role blacks had played in America's wars and held his listeners spellbound.

During Paul's junior year, Reverend Robeson became very ill. In addition to maintaining his rigorous schedule as scholar, athlete, and orator, Paul often went home to care for his father. Reverend Robeson knew that he might be "climbin Jacob's ladder" soon, and he knew of the forthcoming oratorical contest at Rutgers. True to his code of excellence and commitment, Reverend Robeson extracted an iron-clad promise from Paul that he would compete and win.

Mrs. Geraldine Bledsoe, a life long friend of Paul Robeson, remembers the incident well and added this information:

> As the time approached for the oratorical contest, Paul's father who was very ill said to him: "Whatever happens to me, I want you to give your speech and win." When the time came for the contest, Paul's father had died, and his body was lying in state.
>
> Mrs. Arthur Moore, her daughter, Bessie, and I went to Rutgers to be with him at the Oratorical Contest. The Moores, a Princeton family, were members of the church that Paul's father pastored in Princeton and like myself were close, lifelong friends of the Robeson family.
>
> Paul stood on the stage, gaunt, pale obviously fatigued. That quality of voice and soul that moved, uplifted, and ennobled people throughout his life came forth as he spoke on "The Negro and the Constitution" voicing the hopes and aspirations of a people in bondage and pleading with his country, America, to live up to the promises of the constitution. Paul won the contest and won the contest in his senior year as well.[18]

We have noted earlier that Paul Robeson was not aloof from the black community. He did social work and actively involved himself in the issues of the local black community. In fact, it was a reciprocal relationship in which both derived service and sustenance from each other. "The Young Men's Christian Association," he reminisced, "gave me an opportunity for self expression and service through its high school clubs and college conferences. I was always active in the College Association."

New Brunswick is only fifteen miles from Somerville, and he often went home to revitalize his spirit with the feelings and philosophy of his people. Paul sometimes travelled to the small New Jersey churches where his family was loved and respected. At these times, he would often sing and hold a dialogue with the congregation. They loved him and claimed him as their own. As one church sister remembered:

> . . . He used to come back and sing for us at the church concerts. He was always the same Paul every time you met him, too. Learnin' didn't go to his head.[19]

Shortly before graduation, a local civic group organized a testimonial in his honor.

> To show their appreciation by the presentation of a purse and to express their regrets at the departure after four years' associations, of one so well loved and respected, a farewell reception and dinner was tended Paul Robeson ... at the YMCA by the Union Civic League.[20]

After the introductions and speeches were made, Robeson gave an acceptance speech in which he stated the purpose of his life:

> He hoped his life's work could be a memorial to his father's training and that his work was not for his own self but that he might help the race to a higher life.[21]

When Robeson attended college, most graduating seniors were required to write a thesis. The title of his senior thesis was, **The Fourteenth Amendment, the Sleeping Giant of the American Constitution**. The main premise of his thesis was to validate the constitutional right of black Americans. The thesis began with a history of the Amendment. The main body of the work was an exposition on the Constitution and an interpretation of the Amendment as it defines citizenship, jurisdiction and due process. His conclusion interpreted the concept of equal protection under the law and its application for all Americans.

Rutgers held its one-hundred-fifty-third commencement on June 10, 1919, in the First Reform Church. Paul Leroy Robeson delivered the graduating class oration. The title of his oration was "The New Idealism."

> He spoke for national unity and the sacrifice necessary for the development of everyone. Presenting this view against the larger panorama of the First World War, he declared that his generation must struggle for peace, fight against poverty, prejudice, and the demoralization of the human spirit. Suffice to say, the oration speech was the most acclaimed presentation of the day, and it was a fitting way for this young black student to end his college career.[22]

THE RED SUMMER OF 1919

While Paul Robeson was receiving the kudos of a few Americans in New Jersey, things were quite different for most black Americans. A Red Summer was taking place. Between June and December 1919, seventy-six black Americans had constitutional rights violated with fatal results: they were lynched. Many of them were former soldiers who had just returned home after fighting to make the world safe for democracy. Also during this six month period, there were 25 race riots. The most famous of which was the one in Chicago where 38 persons were killed and 537 injured. Race riots also occurred in Washington, D. C., Knoxville, Tennessee, Omaha, Nebraska and Elaine, Arkansas.

Nineteen-nineteen was the tercentenary of the black man landing in English America. Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, editor of **Crisis**, the official organ of the N.A.A.C.P., wanted to develop publications and appropr.ate activities to commemorate the event. The plan was aborted because the violence and lynching caused the N.A.A.C.P. to husband its resources in order to meet this extraordinary challenge to black America. It held an Anti-Lynching Conference in New York and defended itself in Texas when its Attorney General attempted to ban it from the state. In Atlantic City, the American Federation voted to abolish discrimination in union leadership. And in Philadelphia, at the yearly meeting of the Friends, a committee was established to work toward the abolition of lynching. Meanwhile, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church went on record as being opposed to lynching.

A long, long way from Harlem in upstate New York, a group of black delegates met at Madame C. J. Walker's estate to form The International League of Darker People. Their objective was to organize all black delegates at the Paris Peace Conference. In Washington, D. C., Woodrow Wilson was still in the White House administering his

version of "benign neglect." And as the boys -- white and black came home from France, General Pershing awarded the Distinguished Service Cross to 12 blacks of the 370th Infantry from Illinois and to eight blacks of the 371st Infantry from South Carolina. Meanwhile, the South Carolina Legislature carried its doctrine of "separate but equal" to its logical conclusion by voting $100,000 for a memorial to black soldiers from the Palmetto State, and the same amount for a monument for white soldiers. The Urban League held its national convention in Detroit and learned the distressing news about the unemployment of blacks since the Armistice was signed. Rural blacks and black war veterans were migrating to Harlem, the Black Cultural Capital of America and Charles H. Roberts, a Republican, became the first black man elected to the Aldermanic Board. That year in Cairo, Georgia, a black man was born who would carry on the tradition established by Robeson. His name was Jack Roosevelt Robinson. We know him as Jackie Robinson. Back in New York City, Paul Leroy Robeson enrolled in law school at Columbia University and was doing well.

POST GRADUATE YEARS

Reverend Robeson had hoped that Paul would become a minister but his son did not wish to be one. So father and son agreed upon the law as a career for him, and his brother Ben became a minister. In the fall of 1919, Paul moved to Harlem and entered Columbia Law School. He studied under some great legal minds and amassed a fine academic record. While in law school, he played professional football to support himself. Robey first played with Fritz Pollard on the Akron Indians of the American Professional League in 1920 and 1921. During the 1922 season, he played on a team in Milwaukee.

Nineteen twenty-one was an eventful year for Robeson. In that year, he married Eslanda Cardozo Goode. Miss Goode was born in Washington, D. C. and attended the University of Chicago and Columbia University, where she received a degree in Chemistry in 1923.

She met Robeson at a party in Harlem when he came there to attend law school. Years later she told reporters, "At that time, everybody thought he was just another one of those famous football players who wouldn't amount to anything. But I thought he was terrific. I said to my self, I'd better marry him before these people catch on."

In 1925, their only child was born, a son named Paul Leroy Robeson, Jr. While they were living in England, Mrs. Robeson studied anthropology at London University and the London School of Economics. She eventually earned her Ph.D. in this field. In addition to pursuing her career as an anthropologist and writer, she managed her husband's career and was his chief confidante.

When Robeson graduated from law school in February, 1923, he had difficulty finding a job. In those days, it was not easy for blacks to secure jobs in law firms. Most

black lawyers took jobs in governmental agencies or opened offices of their own in the burgeoning ghettoes of the North. Institutional racism of American society was a major bulwark to their advancement in the law.

Despite the odds and because he was Robey, Paul went to work for Louis W. Stotesbury's law firm. Stotesbury was a prominent New York attorney and a Rutgers' man who gave his fellow alumnus a break. Most young lawyers might have felt that this was an opportunity to capture a piece of the American Dream but Robeson was not that sanguine. After practicing law for a while, he saw that there were certain limitations to his growth and development as an attorney and upon his ability to pursue an independent course of action in the struggle for human rights. The arts, however, seemed to have no limitations and one could soar as high as his ability could take him. Robeson's genius and confidence in his abilities helped him to reason that there were viable alternatives that he as a black man could take. When he met the great American playwright Eugene O'Neil, it was a case of ability meeting opportunity and a viable alternative appeared.

ROBESON — THE ACTOR

Before their marriage, Eslanda persuaded Paul to accept a role in the play, **Simon the Cyrenian**, at the Harlem Y.M.C.A. in 1920. "Even then," he recalled, "I never meant to become an actor. I just said yes to get her to quit pestering me."

Soon acting became a lucrative way to finance his education. In 1921, Robeson repeated his role in **Simon** at the Lafayette Theatre and the following year he played Jim in **Taboo**. This vehicle appeared on Broadway at the Sam Harris Theatre. After it closed on Broadway, the title of the play was sensationalized and changed to **The Vodoo**, and it played on the London stage for several more months.

Robeson returned to America and joined the Provincetown Players, a theatrical group in Greenwich Village. It was there that he met O'Neill, who had already written a play with a Negro theme. This was **Emperor Jones** and the black actor Charles Gilpin starred in the title role.

When Robeson and O'Neill met, the playwright was looking for a black actor to star in his new play, **All God's Chilluns Got Wings**. The male lead in this play had to possess dramatic power, sensitivity, as well as intelligence to properly interpret the sensitive theme of intermarriage. Robeson read the play and won the role of Jim Harris. Before the play opened, there were dire predictions that there would be race riots but, fortunately, there were none. Robeson gave a beautiful and tender performance as Jim Harris. The play received good reviews but was only a modest success.

In the July 1924 issue of the **American Mercury**, George Jean Nathan, an extremely caustic critic, evaluated Robeson's performance in **All God's Chilluns Got Wings** and **The Emperor Jones** in the following manner:

> Robeson, with relatively little experience and with no training to speak of, is one of the most thoroughly eloquent, impressive and convincing actors that I have looked at and listened to in almost twenty years of professional theatre-going. He gains his effects with means that not only seem natural, but that are natural. He does things beautifully, with his voice, his features, his hands, his whole somewhat ungainly body, yet I doubt that he knows how he does them.[23]

In 1925, Eugene O'Neill paid the following tribute to Paul Robeson:

> In gratitude to Paul Robeson, in whose interpretation of Brutus Jones I have found the most complete satisfaction an author can get — that of seeing his creation born into flesh and blood; and in whose creation of Jim Harris in my **All God's Chilluns Got Wings**, I found not only complete fidelity to my intent under trying circumstances, but beyond that true understanding and racial integrity.[24]

Robeson starred in **Black Boy** in 1926 and a revival of **The Emperor Jones**. The latter was a block buster and Robeson received rave reviews. Robeson appeared in **The Emperor Jones** in London in 1928 and on the Berlin stage in 1929. He also starred in another O'Neill play, **The Harry Ape**, in 1931.

Joe in **Showboat** was another popular role that theatre audiences associated with Robeson. When this musical was first produced, Jules Bledsoe, a black actor, played Joe. When it was revived in London in 1928 and New York City in 1932, Robeson played the part. He will forever be identified with **Ole Man River**. It was **Othello**, however, that became the high watermark of his career as an actor.

Robeson first played **Othello** at the Savoy Theatre in London in 1930. He had a first-rate cast with Peggy Ashcroft and Desdemona, Maurice Browne as Iago, Ralph Richardson as Roderigo, and Sybil Thorndike as Emilia. In the Margaret Webster Production, Robeson played the tragic Moor, Uta Hagen was Desdemona, and Iago was played

by Jose Ferrer. This play established a record for a Shakespearean play on Broadway, where it ran for 296 performances. **Othello** went on the road and appeared in most of the major cities in the East, Midwest and West Coast. Margaret Webster's Production began in 1943 and ended in 1945. Drama critics were unstinting in their praise.

Lewis Nichols, **New York Times**, declared:

> ... the best interpretation of **Othello** to be seen here in a good many years.

Harold Barnes, **New York Herald Tribune**, stated:

> Othello is so illuminated and held in a taut and thrilling pattern that it becomes in many respects something new and wonderful in the theatre ... a triumphant handling of tragedy by Miss Webster.

Robert Garland, **New York Journal American**, reported:

> Paul Robeson gives the outstanding performance in New York ... the best play current on Manhattan Island ... Go see it.

Burton Roscoe, **New York World Telegram**, said:

> One of the most memorable events in the history of the theatre ... there has never been and never will be a finer rendition of this particular tragedy. It is unbelievably magnificent ... there has simply been nothing on Broadway in years to earn our gratitude to the theatre more profoundly.[25]

For his performance, Robeson was given the Donaldson Award for 1944. He also received the Gold Medal Award for the best diction in the American theatre. The Gold Medal Award is presented by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and since the Award's inception in 1924, it has been given to only nine persons.

Robeson gave his last performance as Othello in 1959 when he appeared in the English production at Stratford-On-Avon. Mary Ure played Desdemona and Sam Wanamaker portrayed Iago. This was during the Quadricentennial Celebration of the Poet's birth.

ROBESON IN FILMS

Paul Robeson not only acted on stage, he also acted in films. It is fair to say that he found acting in the legitimate theatre much more gratifying, however. In 1939, he voiced his disillusionment with the motion picture industry and virtually retired from the silver screen. In his winter of discontent, he said:

> I thought I could do something for the Negro race in films, show the truth about them and other people, too. I used to do my part and go away feeling satisfied, thought everything was o.k. Well it wasn't. The industry was not prepared to permit me to portray the life or express the living interests, hopes and aspirations of the struggling people from whom I come. You bet they will never let me play a part in a film in which a Negro is on top.[26]

When Robeson was 26 years old, he starred in his first film, **Body and Soul**. This film was produced by Oscar Micheaux, a pioneer, black film producer. Most of Robeson's film work was done between 1933 and 1939 when he appeared in eleven films. He appeared in the film version of **The Emperor Jones** in 1933 and **Sanders of the River** the following year. **Sanders of the River** was a great disappointment because when the film was edited, it became a vehicle that advocated and rationalized colonialism. When it was premiered in London, Robeson stormed out of the theatre in protest. After that experience, he tried to include a clause in his contracts that gave him some form of creative control over a film.

Robeson's film credits are **Emperor Jones**, 1933, **Sanders of the River**, 1934, **Showboat**, 1935, **Song of Freedom**, 1936, **Jericho**, filmed in Egypt and London, 1937, **Big Fella**, 1937, **King Solomon's Mines**, 1937, and **Tales of Manhattan**, 1939, in which he had a cameo role. **Tales of Manhattan** was a very racist film and was not one that Robeson chose to remember.

Robeson was only proud of his involvement in two films, actually it was more like one-and-one half. He declared that he liked and approved of the first half of **Song of Freedom**. This film told the story of an African Prince who in his infancy was taken from his native land when a **coup d' etat** occurred and his family was killed. This young Prince was carried to England where he grew to manhood ignorant of his royal lineage and became a stevedore on the London docks. The young Prince, John Zenga, relates well to his mates; they sing as they work and as they hoist a pint or two in the local pub. John Zenga has on two things from his past — a gold medallion and a haunting melody that leaps from the depths of his unconscious to prick his thoughts.

Soon John Zenga is discovered by a kindly impresario who makes him a star and they travel throughout Europe giving concerts. Zenga discovers his identity and rejects his singing career and goes to claim his birthright. After behaving like the "ugly European," Zenga learns to accept and love his people and manages to become the new ruler. In order to bring the necessities of the modern world to his island kingdom, Zenga becomes an absentee ruler. He tours for six months in order to raise funds for capital expansion and he returns to rule for six months.

In this film, a black actress, Elizabeth Welch, plays Zenga's wife and she and Robeson behaved like rational human beings who were married and in love and not like a pair of exotic creatures. This was a plus as far as the film was concerned because it was not the usual situation.

Proud Valley is very much like a documentary film and was filmed in the coal mining district of Wales. It is the story of a black coal miner from America who comes to live in Rhondda Valley and to work in the mines. In the Rhondda Valley the mining towns are in a state of economic decay because of unemployment. Their entire well-

being depends on the mines, and their safety valve and center of cultural identity is the Eisteddfod where the choirs from the various villages come to compete for the prize.

This was a seminal experience for both the miners and Robeson. He lived with them and got to know them as warm, vibrant human beings who transcended the limitations of race and nationality. **Proud Valley** was a very humane film that was seldom made in Hollywood.

Robeson went to Moscow in 1934 to confer with Sergei Eisenstein, the famous Russian film director, about the production of a film based upon the life of Toussaint L'Ouverture. In those days when people travelled across Europe, they usually went by train. Robeson, his wife and entourage stopped in Berlin for several days. Hitler had just come to power, and Robeson saw with his own eyes the face of Fascism.

While Robeson and his party were preparing to leave for Moscow, he was surrounded by a group of storm troopers who began calling him unprintable names and racial epithets. Robeson was fluent in German and understood every word and did not back down. For a moment it looked as though Robeson would have to fight for his life but the storm troopers stepped aside, and he was allowed to leave. The Moscow film project did not materialize but the experience in Berlin caused Robeson to hate Fascism with all of his being.

Because of the times in which he lived, Paul Robeson had to act in some horrible films. They were not as racist as **Birth of a Nation** nor were they as stereotypic and infantile as those in which Stepin Fetchit performed. Despite the limitations of the script, he brought dignity and sensitivity to these films as well as giving thousands of black folks, in the developing ghettoes of America, an opportunity to see him and to

use him as a role model. Finally, Robeson's participation in these early films took him all over the world and helped to broaden his concept of human rights. It is tragic that he was years ahead of the majority of his countrymen.

Alexander Woollcott, the acerbic critic of American life and letters, observed this quality and made the following comment in 1933:

> Of the countless people I have known in my wandering over the world, he is one of the few of whom I would say that they have greatness. I do not mean greatness as a football player or as an actor or as a singer ... I mean greatness as a person. ... In his case I despair of ever putting into convincing words my notion of this quality in him. I can only say that by what he does, thinks and is, by his unassailable dignity and his serene, incorruptible simplicity, Paul Robeson strikes me as having been made out of the original stuff of the world. In this sense he is coeval with Adam and the redwood trees of California ... I am proud of belonging to his race. For, of course, we both are members of the one sometimes fulsomely described as human.[27]

Years later, Lloyd L. Brown, a writer and friend of Robeson, expressed a similar thought when he said:

> How fortunate we were to have had Paul Robeson walk the earth among us! As artist and more he was a prophetic vision of how wondrously beautiful the human race may yet become.[28]

ROBESON — THE SINGER

Paul Robeson was fortunate in that God gave him a magnificent voice. This great voice gave him another vehicle with which to carry his message to the people. If acting had been his only avenue of expression, Robeson's influence would have been lessened. On the stage and in films, he spoke the lines of the author and interpreted roles according to the dictates of the director. Another factor was that being black there were only a few plays and films in which he could appear with integrity. Given his value system, he would have rejected ninety percent of them. Singing gave Robeson an opportunity to be his own man and to influence the masses.

Robeson met Lawrence Brown in 1922 while he was in London. He was appearing in a play trying to earn money to pay his law school tuition. Brown was in England working as the accompanist to that great black concert singer, Roland Hayes. In their conversation, Brown told Robeson about a project that he had undertaken. Brown, it seems, was in the process of arranging and scoring a number of the slave songs that we now call spirituals. Many of them had not been written down before. Brown and Robeson did not meet again until 1925, and they subsequently agreed to perform in a concert of Negro spirituals on Sunday, April 19, 1925 at the Greenwich Village Theatre. The Harlem Renaissance was in full bloom and the rendering of Negro spirituals was popular in New York City.

On the evening of the concert, the threatre was sold out. Robeson and Brown offered a program of twelve spirituals and four songs. Some of the following songs were presented: **Scandalize My Name, Water Boy, Go Down Moses, By an' By, Every Time I Feel the Spirit, Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen, Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child, Swing Low Sweet Chariot, Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho**, and **I've Got a Home in That Rock**.

The concert was a success! One music critic reported that:

> He (Robeson) combined with a rich and mellow voice a dramatic restraint and power that seemed to hold unheard thunder behind each song. Here was bedrock, fundamental, primitive.

Another critic offered the opinion that:

> Here was a man who provided a thrill to be equalled only by Chaliapin when he sang Mussorgsky.

The **New York Times** reported:

> Intense earnestness which grips his hearer ... Mr. Robeson's gift is to make (the spirituals) tell in every line, and that not by an outward stress, but by an overwhelming inward conviction. Sung by one man, they voiced the sorrow and hopes of a people.[29]

After the concert, Robeson signed a contract with the Victor Talking Machine Company and a concert bureau. During the next two years he toured the United States and Europe giving concerts and adding to the ever expanding legend of Paul Robeson.

Later Robeson expanded his reportoire to include folk songs and classics from many nations such as, **Chinese Children's Songs**, **Monologue from Boris Godunov**, **Londonderry Air**, **Lock Lomond**, and **Hassidic Chants**. He emphasized folk songs because he felt that they had a universality that could help humans to see that all men are brothers. Robeson further validated this by his own research and study of the interrelatedness of the musical structure folk songs from different lands. In order to do this work, he learned to speak and sing in 22 languages. He was such a linguist that he was able to translate the writings of Confucius directly from Chinese into Swahili. Robeson sang

in such unfamiliar languages as Romanian, Uzbek, Gaelic, Urdu, Swahili, Krio, and Mandasin. "He felt," said Margaret Burrough, "that there was nothing inflections and the musical scale and tones in the many languages spoken by the human race." To him language was music and music was language.

Water Boy, **Joe Hill**, **Old Man River** and **Ballad for Americans** are some of the songs for which he is best know. It was his rendition of **Ballad for Americans**, however, that brought him to the attention of the wider American public.

During World War II, Robeson sang for the armed forces, at bond rallies and in war plants. After Othello closed in 1945, Robeson and Lawrence Brown went overseas as part of a U.S.O. production. It was during this period that his concerts became less formal and became more of a dialogue with people. This **modus operandi** was not new to him. It harked back to the days at Rutgers when he went to those small black churches, where his father was known and loved, to sing and talk with the congregation.

Robeson used his soaring basso-baritone to transmute folk songs and spirituals into thunderbolts. These thunderbolts were used to aid causes in which he believed. During the Spanish Civil War, Robeson went to Spain to sing for the Spanish Republican troops and Americans in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. He sang at labor rallies and fund raising events.

Robeson's brother Ben was the pastor of the historic Mother Zion A.M.E. Church in New York City. In the forties, the church had a mortgage of $160,000 and a debt of $40,000 for the church organ. Paul Robeson assisted the congregation in liquidating both debts by appearing in a series of concerts at Mother Zion Church. All proceeds from the concerts were used to liquidate the debt.

John Oliver Killens, the writer, told the story of how Robeson helped him when he was a union organizer. Killens was in the process of organizing a group of cafeteria workers most of whom were black. The strike was long and costly and the strike fund was depleted. Killens and a member of the union went to Robeson in order to enlist his help. He agreed to perform at a benefit concert for the union. They were overwhelmed by his humility and generosity. When they thanked him, he said, "Oh, no. I'm doing it for myself!" There are many other stories of how this great man used his talent to help people in need.

Paul Leroy Robeson was indeed his father's son. He brought selflessness and brotherhood to men and women. This quality was embodied in his singing and when he sang one heard the "unsullied expression of the human spirit."

PAUL ROBESON — ADVOCATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The years 1940-1947 were the halcyon years for Paul Robeson. He was at the peak of his career and was acclaimed by much of the general public. Little did he realize that he would be caught in the transition of cooperation with our noble Russian allies and cold war politics accented by the hysteria of the McCarthy Period. In this time span, Robeson went from a widely publicized American artist to an "unperson." In order to obtain the proper historical perspective of this, we must go back in time and look at certain significant events.

We have described Robeson's moral development and how he was true to his principles. This was constantly validated by his behavior. Now we must look at his political awareness and development.

From the late nineteen twenties until 1939, Robeson lived abroad, mostly in England, because there were fewer color barriers. In the United States, it was possible for a few black Americans to achieve eminence on the stage and concert hall and to be accorded the status of "a credit to his or her race." Nevertheless, they were not given the status of social equals by the white community. They could not obtain a room at most hotels nor eat in most restaurants.

In 1928, while lunching with George Bernard Shaw, Robeson was asked about his views on socialism. Robeson confessed that he had never really studied nor thought much about it. He subsequently explored the socialist point of view and made this statement:

> My belief in the principles of scientific socialism, my deep conviction that for all mankind a socialist society represents an advance to a higher stage of life.[30]

In 1937, Robeson and his wife, Eslanda, went to Spain where a civil war was raging. That experience was an important factor in causing Robeson to return to America. It helped him to see the correlation between the problems of the oppressed and disadvantaged people of the world. Robeson saw his mission and described it as follows:

> The artist must elect to fight for Freedom or for Slavery.
> I have made my choice. I had no alternative.[31]

Robeson came home and joined the battle. He worked actively in support of three organizations: The Committee to Aid China, for which he gave several concerts; the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, which aided Spanish Loyalists who were held in French internment camps and others who sought political asylum in Mexico; and Council of African Affairs of which he was the chairman as well as a founding member. Robeson also recorded **Ballad for Americans**, appeared in **Othello**, and made significant contributions to the war effort. Despite the praise, one columnist uttered the hope that Robeson would confine his activities to stage and concert hall and, in effect, issued the following **caveat**:

> America has done well by you, ... Paul Robeson, but you should sing its praises and not remind it that your black brothers are in chains.[32]

But this he could not do! And what began as whisper became a roar! These reactions did not cause Robeson to lessen his efforts. During this period Robeson came to Detroit and marched in picket lines at various factories.

In March of 1942, occupancy of the Sojourner Truth Housing Project was a hot issue in Detroit. In fact some researchers considered it to be the prelude of the 1943 riot in Detroit. Robeson came to Detroit to appear in a concert sponsored by Ford

Local 600. Members of the Sojourner Truth Citizens Committee visited Robeson in order to inform him of the crisis and to enlist his support. Robeson agreed to address a mass meeting at Bethel AME Church the following afternoon. His message was very simple and direct:

> ... This war (WWII) is for freedom and particularly for the freedom of the colored races. Don't think that because the Japanese are colored they are leading the fight for freedom. A small, ruthless minority in Japan persecutes all the rest of the Japanese and all other races they can reach. Don't think that the Japanese propagandists aren't using this Sojourner Truth issue against the U. S. This is why it's important to settle this issue right.
>
> The Ku Klux Klan must be taught that it cannot upset the decisions of our government to have the Negro families move into the units that were built for them.
>
> For a long time, I thought the artist had a special place; but I was kicked back. I sang before royalty and nobility, but my problem was still there. I could have stayed in the Soviet Union where my color makes no difference, but I could not forget my people or any people who are oppressed. I had to come back and help.
>
> The basic thing about this was the struggle of the 95% of the people for freedom against the 5% who want to keep what they have even if the rest of mankind starves.[33]

In 1943, Robeson led a delegation to meet with the Baseball Commissioner, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, to protest the "color line" in baseball. A year later, he sponsored a National Conference Against Lynching. Robeson appeared at a number of National Maritime Union Conventions and was made a honorary member. He was occasionally involved in the activities of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union and received its first life membership. On July 17, 1946, Robeson went to Windsor, Ontario and marched on the picket line with Dodge workers.

Robeson was in the vanguard of those actors and entertainers who would not appear before segregated audiences. As a result of this decision, he never performed in the South. During World War II, however, he did so, but it was done on his terms. Black colleges were the only places where white and black audiences could congregate on the basis of equality. In 1942, Robeson appeared at the Southern Negro Youth Congress Convention at Tuskegee Institute. He made history when he sang before the first non-segregated audience in the Tuskegee area.

Later, in New Orleans, he expressed these thoughts:

> Deep down, I think, I had imagined Negroes of the South beaten, subservient, cowed. But I see them now courageous and possessors of a profound and instinctive dignity, a race of such magnificence of spirit that there exists no power on earth that could crush them. They will bend, but they will never break ... I find that I must come South again and yet again. It is only here that I achieve absolute and utter identity with my people. There is no question here of where I stand, no need to make a decision. The redcap in the station, the president of your college, the man in the street — they are all one with me, part of me. And I am proud of it, utterly proud of my people.[34]

The end of World War II caused a number of black leaders to wonder if history would repeat itself. The Red Summer of 1919 was indelibly inscribed in their memories. Once again black veterans were returning, seeking jobs and the right to vote. Once again the Ku Klux Klan was on the march, burning crosses in the night as they went. In Columbia, Tennessee an argument between a white man and a black woman and her son over the repair of a radio triggered a racial incident in which four policemen were wounded. Seventy black men were jailed by the highway patrol and state militia, two of whom were mysteriously killed in jail. A black neighborhood was looted and vandalized in an ostensible search for weapons.

In the wake of the Columbia, Tennessee disturbance, Walter White, Executive Secretary of the N.A.A.C.P., established the National Committee for Justice in Columbia Tennessee, and a federal grand jury found no violation of civil rights and returned no indictment. Meanwhile down in Mississippi, Senator Theodore G. Bilbo made a famous speech, in the tradition of Senators Vardaman and Ben Tillman, urging every "red-blooded Anglo-Saxon man in Mississippi to resort to any means to keep hundreds of Negroes from the polls in the July 2 primary." To emphasize the point, he chided, "And if you don't know what that means, you are just not up on your persuasive measures ..."

Soothed and sustained by such racist rhetoric, policemen in Aiken, South Carolina used their clubs to batter Sgt. Issac Woodward, a black man who had been honorably discharged from the Army just three hours before the attack. When Walter White described for President Truman the blinding of Woodward, he was horrified. This was one of the many incidents that prompted him to create the President's Commission on Civil Rights.

During the Red Summer of 1946, President Truman met with a delegation from the American Crusade to End Lynching, a delegation led by Robeson. This meeting opened on a sour note when one of the group compared American lynching to German War Crimes. President Truman responded that the United States could handle its own internal affairs without reference to events in Europe. Robeson nettled the President by suggesting that foreign powers should intervene in the internal affairs of the United States if mob violence were not halted. As we shall subsequently see, this performance did not endear Robeson to official Washington.

Robeson seemed to feel that the new administration was retreating from the ideals of the New Deal. The double **V** for victory (victory at home and abroad) that black America had espoused during the war was not now a reality. Robeson spoke out whenever he had the opportunity.

In March of 1947, Robeson gave a concert in Salt Lake City, Utah at the University of Utah. During the concert, he sang **Joe Hill**, the story of a martyred union organizer who was convicted of murder and executed several decades before in the Utah State Prison. The audience was stunned because this song with its allegations had never been sung publicly before in Utah. After the initial shock, many of them applauded but there were some who sat in stony silence. At the conclusion of the concert, Robeson stepped forward and addressed the audience:

> You have heard my final concert for at least two years and perhaps for many more ... I'm retiring here and now from concert work — I shall sing from now on, for my trade union and college friends; in other words, only at gatherings where I can sing what I please.[35]

Robeson was involved in the third party movement. He supported the Progressive Party in its attempt to elect Henry A. Wallace President of the United States. Robeson devoted a great deal of time and money in campaigning for Wallace in the 1948 Presidential election.

After the 1948 Presidential Campaign, the press "scandalized" his name and Paul Robeson became persona non grata to the entertainment world. The nabobs of the industry closed their doors in his face and cancelled eighty-five concert engagements scheduled for the 1949-1950 season. If their idea was to force him to keep silent about his views or forfeit his career, his enemies did not know the measure of this man.

He merely went to England in February, 1949 and launched a very successful European tour. He is quoted in Marie Seton's biography as saying:

> I decided to go to Europe to resume my professional concerts. I wanted to make it perfectly clear that the world is wide and a few pressures could not stop my career.[36]

Robeson created a storm of controversy in 1949 when he made the following remarks at the World Peace Conference in Paris:

> It is unthinkable that American Negroes will go to war on behalf of those who have oppressed us for generations against a country which in one generation has raised our people to the full dignity of mankind.[37]

Robeson declared that his statement was taken out of context. He said that he had made the statement at the request of 2,000 young people from colonial countries (Third World Countries) who had wanted him to underscore their desire for world peace.

Despite Robeson's disclaimer, the American Press interpreted the statement to mean that Robeson had said, "American Negroes would not fight for their country against Russia!" This created a storm of protest and Robeson became a pariah in certain circles. This feeling led to the Peekskill Riot in the late summer of 1949.

Although he was not a member, Robeson was a supporter of the Harlem Chapter of the Civil Rights Congress. This radical organization championed a number of unpopular causes and was placed on the Attorney General's subversive list as a communist front organization. Robeson was named as one of its chief allies. The Civil Rights Congress had planned a picnic and Robeson concert in Peekskill Park on August 28, 1949 as it had done several times before:

> On two occasions, thousands of working-class citizens from New York City and environs had travelled forty miles to the north to hear Paul Robeson's Peekskill concert. The weekend outings drew garment workers from midtown Manhattan, furriers from the east forties, public workers from Harlem, and dock workers from the west side piers. All came to pay homage to the hero from the left-wing labor movement, Paul Robeson.[38]

After the publicity of the Paris statement, editorials in local newspapers and veterans' groups objected strenuously to the gathering. Violence was threatened and predicted if the event were held. When a group of the sponsors went to Peekskill to view the proposed site, they were attacked by a mob and the concert was postponed. The late Richard Hofstadter, in his final work, **American Violence: A Documentary History**, wrote the following account of the riot:

> The concert was held a week later on September 4, and the sponsors knowing that there was likely to be trouble, provided guards for protection. The concert went on as planned but as the audience left, it was attacked. For miles along the road to New York City, cars were assaulted by American Legionnaires, Westchester police, and local anti-communists. They hurled rocks at windshields, beat members of the departing audience and shouted anti-radical anti-Negro, anti-Semitic epithets.[39]

After the Peekskill event, Robeson was completely banished from the entertainment world. Concert halls all over America closed their doors in his face. Loften Mitchell, a black playwright, made this observation of that period:

> Any organization that sponsored a Robeson appearance was threatened. This became obvious when, during the early 1950's, a group of Harlem citizens organized a committee of 100 to present Robeson in a concert. Many prominent artists who had agreed to participate were threatened by the powers in the entertainment world to stay away. And many citizens who did participate were witched-hunted on their jobs.

> I know. I was there. The Committee of One Hundred launched that concert despite threats of reprisals. The black community packed The Golden Gate and the Establishment trembled.[40]

During his time of troubles, Robeson came to Detroit in support of labor and political causes. Dr. Charles H. Wright has done much to recapture this era in his book, **Robeson: Labor's Forgotten Champion**. Dr. Wright writes about Robeson's visits to Detroit and his affinity for working men and women and labor unions. The author also described how Robeson helped to organize the National Negro Labor Council along with George Crockett, Coleman Young and Reverend Charles Hill. Robeson often appeared at Hartford Avenue Baptist Church where Reverend Charles Hill was the pastor. Reverend Hill and Robeson were kindred spirits in that they were both strong advocates of human rights. Robeson helped Reverend Hill in his campaigns for Common Council. In the final analysis, Robeson was able to survive and prevail because the black community and black church put their arms around him and gave him encouragement and protection.

Robeson was called before a number of investigating committees to ascertain whether or not he was a member of the Communist Party. The following statement is his explanation why he refused to respond to the question: Are you a member of the Communist Party?

> In 1946 at a legislative hearing in California, I testified under oath that I was not a member of the Communist Party, but since then I have refused to give testimony or sign affidavits as to that fact. There is no mystery involved in this refusal. I have made it a matter of principle as many others have done to refuse to comply with any demands of legislative committees, or departmental officials that infringe upon the constitutional rights of all Americans.[41]

To his friends Robeson readily acknowledged that he was not a communist! That he knew people with radical and non-conformist views was not new to them.

> In the wide acquaintanceships that I have had over the years, I have never hesitated to associate with people who hold non-conformist or radical views, and this has been true since my earliest days in the American theater where I first met people who challenged the traditional order of things. And so, Benjamin J. Davis is a dear friend of mine and I have always been pleased to say so. And he has been for many years a leader of the Communist Party of this country.[42]

In his autobiography, **Here I Stand**, Robeson explained his friendship towards the people of the Soviet Union this way:

> My views concerning the Soviet Union and my warm feelings of friendship for the peoples of that land, and the friendly sentiments which they have often expressed toward me, have been pictured as something quite sinister by Washington officials and other spokesmen for the dominant white group in our country. It has been alleged that I am part of some kind of international conspiracy. The truth is, I am not and never have been involved in any international conspiracy or any other kind, and do not know anyone who is. It should be plain to everybody, and especially to Negroes, that if the government officials had a shred of evidence to back up that charge, you can bet your last dollar that they would have tried to put me under the jail. But they have no such evidence because that charge is a lie.[43]

In discussing Robeson's admiration of Soviet Russia, Walter White, Executive Secretary of the N.A.A.C.P., said:

> No honest American, white or Negro, can sit in judgment on a man like Robeson unless and until he has sacrificed time, talent, money and popularity in doing his utmost to root out the racial and economic evils which infuriated men like Robeson.[44]

In 1951, Robeson angered some Americans when he cooperated with the Civil Rights Congress in the development of a petition entitled, **We Charge Genocide: The Crime of Government Against the Negro**. This 240-page book was a documentation of the United States government's role in maintaining institutional racism which was genocidal for black Americans.

Robeson presented this petition to the United Nations Secretarial in New York City on December 16, 1951, while William Patterson, Secretary of the Civil Rights Congress, presented the same petition to the United Nations General Assembly in Paris. **We Charge Genocide** presented documentary evidence and was signed by Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, Mary Church Terrell, George Murphy, Jr., Eslanda Goode Robeson, Reverend Charles Hill, and other advocates of human rights for black Americans. **We Charge Genocide** was praised by communist and some non-communist nations and condemned by the United States government. Moveover, it further alienated Robeson from most of his countrymen.

In 1950, Robeson had his passport revoked. He could not sing in the concert halls of America, and he could not travel abroad to fulfill concert engagements. Robeson suffered severe financial losses. His income dropped from $100,000 in 1947 to $6,000 in 1952.

In 1956, Robeson was subpoenaed to appear before a sub-committee of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Francis Walter, Congressman from Pennsylvania, chaired this sub-committee and this response by Robeson struck at the heart of the matter:

> I am being tried for fighting for the rights of my people, who are still second-class citizens in this United States of America. My mother was born in your state, Mr. Walter, and my mother was a Quaker, and my ancestors in the time of Washington baked bread for George Washington's troops when they crossed the Delaware, and my own father was a slave. I stand here struggling for the rights of my people to be full citizens in this country. And they are not.[45]

During the hearing, Robeson exercised his constitutional right to use the fifth amendment, to avoid self incrimination, 35 times. Robeson had a prepared statement that he wanted to enter into the record of the proceedings but Congressman Walter, chairman of the Sub-Committee, would not allow him to do so. The statement protested the denial of his passport and Robeson wanted to say:

> My travels abroad to sing and act and speak cannot possibly harm the American people. In the past I have won friends for the real America among the millions before whom I have performed — not for Walter, nor for Dulles, not for Eastland, not for the racists who disgrace our country's name — but friends for the American Negro, our workers, our farmers, our artists.[46]

Robeson and his wife held similar beliefs about politics and the black struggle in America. During the "dreadful fifties," Paul Robeson's wife was called before a sub-committee of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Mrs. Robeson met the challenge head-on and defended her position with vigor. She parried all of the questions asked of her. Some of them were insulting and dripping with innuendo.

Mrs. Robeson told the committee that she and her husband were loyal American citizens despite the fact that they did not enjoy equal rights of citizenship. The fact that they refused to sign affidavits stating whether or not they were ever members of the Communist Party was based upon the principle that this violated their constitutional rights.

In responding to other questions, she said Paul Robeson's fight was against discrimination in this country which prevented him from enjoying the rights and privileges of a first-class American citizen. This failure of American democracy had led them to favor many socialist principles and to adopt certain positions similar to those of the Communist Party.

When responding to the question that inquired whether or not she felt that she did not have the same status as any other citizen testifying before this committee, Mrs. Robeson told the Congressman: "You're white and I'm Negro and this is a very white committee."

Robeson was also denied permission to enter Canada, Mexico, and the West Indies where Americans did not need passports.

Robeson took another unpopular stand when he spoke out against the little untidy war in Vietnam. In 1954, Robeson called Ho Chi Minh, the Toussaint L'Ouverture of Indo China and warned that:

> Vast quantities of U. S. bombers, tanks and guns have been sent against Ho Chi Minh and his freedom fighters; and now we are told that soon it may be advisable to send American GI's into Indo China in order that the tin, rubber and tungsten of Southeast Asia be kept by the "free world," meaning white imperialism. ... I ask again: Shall Negro sharecroppers from Mississippi be sent to shoot down brown-skinned peasants in Vietnam — to serve the interests of those who oppose Negro liberation at home and colonial freedom abroad?[47]

During this period. Robeson went from the most highly publicized black man in America to an "unperson." It was as though a dark curtain was constantly placed between him and the public. We have noted that he could not perform except at churches in

the black community. His records were not for sale and were not played on the radio. One of the bitterest ironies of this period is that Paul Robeson never appeared on American television. One writer has described the whole process as "symbolic assassination."

In 1954, Rutgers played the Hall of Fame Game against Lafayette University marking the eighty-fifth anniversary of the birth of intercollegiate football. In the program that day Rutgers listed 65 of its greatest players and Robey's name was absent. There were only two All-American football players to come out of Rutgers: Paul Robeson, 1917 and 1918 and Homer Hazel, 1925. Hazel's pictures and exploits were prominently displayed and Robeson was not mentioned. Throughout the university, his photographs and trophies were removed from public view.

The beleaguered Paul Robeson would not bend nor bow. In 1958, he wrote, **Here I Stand**, a prophetic, defiant, personal narrative. When **Here I Stand** was published, none of the white newspapers and magazines in the United States mentioned its arrival let along review it. Only the black press reported the event and the **Baltimore Afro-American** publicized it widely.

Robeson was not along. Thousands of black Americans and other peoples around the world knew and believed in him. During the "Fearful Fifties," Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, himself an object of the anti-communist witch hunt, made the following statement about the acceptance of Paul Robeson at home and abroad:

> He is without doubt today, as a person, the best known American on earth, to the largest number of human beings. His voice is known in Europe, Asia, and Africa, in the West Indies and South America and in the islands of the seas.

> Children on the streets of Peking, Moscow, Calcutta, and Jakarta greet him and send him their love. Only in his native land is he without honor and rights.[48]

On the occasion of Robeson's sixtieth birthday in 1958, Dr. DuBois made the following statement:

> The presentation of Paul Robeson by the government and the people of the United States during the last nine years has been one of the most contemptible happenings in modern history. ... Yet has Paul Robeson kept his soul and stood his ground. ... As we celebrate the sixtieth birthday of Paul Robeson from Moscow to New Delhi, New York to California and Accra to Johannesburg, we can take our stand and sing with him:
>
> "Out of the night that covers me
> Black as the pit from pole to pole
> I thank whatever gods may be
> For my unconquerable soul."[49]

Thousands of people in England, India, Wales, Canada, South America, Africa, and the Communist Bloc Nations condemned the United States government for its persecution of Robeson. Their attack usually focused upon the State Department. To them, Robeson was a citizen of the world and his welfare was the concern of everyone. In the spring of 1958, Nehru ruffled diplomatic feathers when he said, "He (Robeson) suffers for a cause which should be dear to all of us, for human dignity."

Some of these groups termed Robeson's inability to leave the United States, "house arrest," and they devised various plans to help him escape. The universities of Andrews and Edinburgh in Scotland offered Robeson the position of headmaster. The Shakespeare Company based at Shakespeare's birthplace, Stratford-On-Avon, invited him to come to England and appear in the third production of **Othello**. Throughout the British Isle

a workers' movement, Let Paul Robeson Sing, arose. This was echoed by 16 members of Parliament. It grew to a million or more workers. The Welsh miners invited Robeson to attend their Eisteddfod in 1953. An Eisteddfod is an important cultural event. It is a festive occasion where people come to enjoy themselves and to hear a number of outstanding singing groups.

During the filming of **Proud Land** in 1938, Robeson developed a close relationship with the coal miners and their families in Rhondda Valley. He championed their cause whenever and wherever he could and they helped him to see the universality of the working man's struggle. Poor working conditions in Wales reminded Robeson of the intolerable conditions in which his own relatives worked in the tobacco fields of North Carolina and the coal fields of West Virginia. One of Robeson's biographers, Marie Seton, believes that this experience helped Robeson to decide to end his 12-year exile in 1939.

Robeson could not accept the 1953 invitation to the Eisteddfod and was invited again in 1957, but he had not resolved his passport problems and could not leave this country. This time, however, the Welsh miners had an alternative plan. They arranged for a trans-atlantic telephone connection between Port Cawl, Wales and New York City so that Robeson could sing for his friends in Wales. This event was not publicized in the United States. In Great Britain, however, thousands heard the broadcast and in England and on the continent, millions read about the event in their newspapers. Events such as these helped Robeson to sustain himself during his time of troubles.

The Canadian Mine, Mill and Smelter Worker's Union of British Columbia invited Robeson to come to their convention as a special guest. On the first attempt Robeson was stopped and had to resort to a telephone hook-up to speak and sing to the delegates

at the convention. On May 19, 1952 and August 17, 1953, Robeson gave a concert for members of this union at Peace Arch Park on the United States-Canadian border. Robeson stayed on the American side of the border and sang to his friends on the Canadian side. The Peach Arch Concerts were very successful and rallied thousands of Canadians to his cause.

In June of 1958, the Supreme Court ruled in the case of Kent vs. Dulles that "The Congress had not authorized the State Department to withhold passports because of alleged Communists' beliefs or associations." Under this Supreme Court ruling hundreds of Americans were able to regain their passports. Robeson was notified on June 25, 1958 that he would receive his passport and it was returned the next day. On July 10, 1958 Robeson left for London in order to fulfill artistic commitments.

Several months before his passport was returned, Robeson was allowed to give a concert in Oakland, California. A month later, Robeson returned to Carnegie Hall. He had not appeared there in almost a decade, and although no one knew it at the time, that it was one of his last concerts on an American stage. The May ninth concert at Carnegie Hall was an artistic and popular success. The concert was an emotionally-charged one and there was standing-room-only. After this concert, Irving Kolodin, music critic for **Saturday Review**, wrote:

> Robeson remains a man of magnificent vocal endowments with a highly cultivated sense of phrase and accent, a power of articulation and second to none among his contemporaries.[50]

After they received their passports, the Robesons went to live in England. They gave concerts in Wales, France, U.S.S.R., and East German Republic. In England, Robeson played Othello at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-On-Avon in 1959. Throughout the tour and especially in Russia and East Germany, Robeson was greeted and followed by enthusiastic crowds. He spent some time with Nikita Krushchev in the Crimea.

Robeson was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize in 1952 and an Honorary Degree of Professor of Music from the Moscow State Conservatory in 1959. Nineteen sixty brought additional honors. Humboldt University in East Berlin bestowed an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the German Democratic Republic granted him the German Peace Medal, and a Soviet Mountain Peak of the Kirghiz Pamirs Range was named after Robeson and his likeness was carved in the rock of a mountainside at Kazakhstan.

Robeson's last concert tour took him to Australia and New Zealand. In Australia he also sang for workers on their lunch break, appeared at peace rallies, and spoke at rallies advocating civil rights for Aborigines.

Robeson was hospitalized in 1961 and performed no more. For a while he was hospitalized in an East German Hospital. He was even too ill to come to New York for his brother Ben's funeral in 1963.

Shortly before Christmas, in 1963, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Robeson once more returned to America from their self-imposed exile. They were warmly greeted by their friends and castigated by their foes as this editorial in the **New York Herald Tribune** will attest.

Paul Robeson Ran Away

When the going got rough, when the Negro seemed to be knocking his head against a stone wall of bigotry and racial prejudice, Paul Robeson ran away. He abandoned the battle, as well as his country, to indulge a juvenile's taste for Marxist idealism, leaving it to others to stay at home to fight the war for civil rights.

Fortunately for the Negro community and the country as a whole, there were other men, of sterner stuff than Robeson was made, who did stand and fight — men like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins, A. Philip Randolph and Whitney Young, Jr. These and others like them were the men in the line of march to Washington. Robeson was conspicuous by his absence.

Now that the back of the opposition of civil rights has been broken, Robeson returns, anxious to jump on the bandwagon.

An older man, one might have hoped that he would now be the wiser. But unhappily that does not seem to be the case. According to his wife, he has not at all been disillusioned with communism:

He thinks it's terrific. He always has and always will.

In short, Robeson always has and always will be a juvenile, with a big voice but a small mind which had become so poisoned by the injustices to a minority of his country that it became totally blind to the incomparable injustices to the majority in the Communist world.

With such a warped outlook, Robeson would be more of a hindrance than a help to the civil rights movement. His countrymen have proved that they can manage without him.[51]

In 1964, **I Have a Dream**, Selma, "Freedom Now," SNCC, Dr. Martin Luther King and **We Shall Overcome** were common frames of reference, it seemed as though the world had almost caught up to him. From semi-retirement, Robeson seemed to say, "Right On!"

> While I must continue my ... retirement from public life, I am, of course, deeply involved with the great upsurge of our people. Like all of you, my heart has been filled with admiration for the many thousands of Negro freedom fighters and their white associates who are waging the battle for civil rights throughout the country and especially in the South.
>
> ... For me there has also been the sorrow that I have felt on returning home and experiencing the loss of persons who for many long years were near and dear to me — my beloved older brother, the Reverend Benjamin C. Robeson, who passed away while I was gone; and my longtime colleague and co-worker, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, foremost statesman and scholar of our people, who died last year in Ghana. And now has come deep grief at the death of Ben Davis, a precious friend whose indomitable courage and dedication to the fight for freedom has always been a glowing inspiration for me.
>
> Many thousand gone but we, the living, are more firmly resolved: No more driver's lash for me!
>
> ... When I wrote in my book, **Here I Stand**, in 1958 that the time is now, some people thought that perhaps my watch was fast (and maybe it was a little), but most of us seem to be running on the same time—now. The power of Negro action, of which I then wrote, has changed from an idea to a reality that is manifesting itself throughout our land. The concept of mass militancy, of mass action, is no longer deemed too radical in Negro life. The idea that black Americans should see that the fight for a Free World begins at home — a shocking idea when expressed in Paris in 1949 — no longer is challenged in our communities. The hot summer of struggle for equal rights has replaced the cold war abroad as the concern of our people.[52]

John Henrik Clarke, distinguished black historian and the other editors of **Freedomways Magazine**, sponsored a "Freedomways Salute to Paul Robeson" at the Hotel Americana in New York City on April 22, 1965. This was a memorable occasion and one of his last public appearances. After a trip to the west coast that summer, poor health forced Robeson to retire completely from public life.

In December of 1965, Robeson was dealt a tragic blow. His beloved "Essie" died after a short illness. There is no record of what he said or how he expressed his grief. Being a man of great constancy, it was most certainly a reaffirmation of his love and devotion and a variation of what he said in the dedication of, **Here I Stand**:

> To Eslanda Goode Robeson
> Distinguished writer and anthropologist
>
> Thanks for many things —
> For your untiring labors in the interests of the African peoples,
> For your devotion to the struggle of our folk here in America for full freedom,
> For your constructive analyses of the momentous events at the United Nations, which affect all manner of human societies,
> For the deepiy shared belief in and labors for the attainment of a lasting peace for all the peoples of the earth,
> And deepest gratitude for your help and guidance over many years of struggle, aspiration, achievement, and the constant awareness of a better future for our children and grandchildren.[53]

Once again the family closed ranks and came to the rescue. Instead of it being "Pop," Bill, Ben, Reeve, it was Paul, Jr., and his family and his sister Marion. In his childhood, Robeson had always thought that Marion brought an inner smile and "blessing of laughter" to their household.

Mrs. Marion Forsythe, widow of Dr. Forsythe, was a retired school teacher. She had maintained the Bustill family tradition by following the teaching profession and remaining in Philadelphia. Now it was her home that became his sanctuary.

As the terms "black power," "the Kerner Report," the Black Panthers, and the black man's "winter of discontent" manifested themselves on the nation's television screen and as independent black nation-states emerged and "Africa for Africans"

was no longer considered a revolutionary phrase, Robeson became a prophet as well as our maligned black prince and honors reappeared. His trophies and pictures were taken from storage and Rutgers named the Campus Student Center at Newark after him. At the dedication ceremonies on April 9, 1972, Dr. Edward J. Bloustein, President of Rutgers University, made these comments:

> We are here to pay homage to a great American; a man who through his world-wide acclaim brought esteem to our nation and our University. Today, after a period of neglect by this University of which I am ashamed, we return to Paul Robeson some small portion of that great honor he brought to us.
>
> A **scholar**, he graduated from Rutgers College as class valedictorian; Paul Robeson is a man of intellect.
>
> An **athlete**, he won 12 varsity letters and achieved All-American status twice; Paul Robeson provides a model of physical grace, strength and prowess. That prowess, it is my hope, will soon be recognized by membership in the Football Hall of Fame.
>
> An **artist**, he established himself as one of the greatest American singers and actors of this century; Paul Robeson is universally acclaimed for his professional pre-eminence.
>
> A **voice of his people**, he spoke and lived black pride before it became politically acceptable in the white community; Paul Robeson is a model of black political activism.
>
> Were this the full measure of the man, it would be sufficient reason for us to honor him. But Paul Robeson is even more than this. He transcended his time, his race and his person to join that select group of souls who speak for all humanity . . .[54]

A panel of black historians in 1972 selected Robeson as one of the ten "most important black men in American history." The Urban League gave him the Whitney M. Young National Memorial Award. The Black Psychiatrists of America presented Robeson with The Solomon Fuller Award for "contributions to promoting the mental health of Black Americans." The Yale Ellington Fellowship Program awarded him the Ellington

Medal. One award continued to elude him. That was election to the Football Hall of Fame. That honor would have pleased him very much.

On Sunday, April 15, 1973, a number of important people met at Carnegie Hall in order to celebrate a birthday tribute to Robeson. Artists and speakers on the program were:

Harry Belefonte
Leon Bibb
Cesar Chavez
Ramsey Clark
Angela Davis
Ruby Dee
Dizzy Gillespie
Honorable Richard Gordon Hatcher
Bishop J. Clinton Hoggard
Linda Hopkins
And the Greater Central Baptist Church Choir
James Earl Jones
Coretta King
Letta Mbulu
Zero Mostel
Odetta
Sidney Poitier
Paul Robeson, Jr.
Robert Ryan
Pete Seeger

There were messages and tributes from hundreds of people:

> The people's heroes will survive even the mightiest imperialists. Along with Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. DuBois, Paul Robeson is one of the greatest of those people's heroes ...
>
> In Africa, long before the inevitable drive toward self-determination and national independence, Paul Robeson was there to awaken the long suppressed desires for freedom, to ignite the sparks of self-realization and active resistance. Long before their names were known, he had talked to and became fast friends with Nkrumah, Azikiwe and Kenyatta, names which would soon become synonyms of African liberation ...

Love for people, a passion for justice and a yearning for freedom. That is the Paul Robeson that no power on earth can conceal ...

It is for us, the inheritors, to inscribe in the pages of history for all to see the full truth of the full meaning of Paul Robeson. Robeson. Robeson — the inspiration for the now generation. Robeson — the extraordinary artist. Robeson — the revolutionary.

Yes, a revolutionary in the true sense of the word. He was appalled by the status quo. He exposed the sins of our times. He struggled for change. He gave his boundless energies and his superb gifts freely, but most of all to those who were fighting for change — the unions, to the anti-fascists, to the youth and to the struggle for black power. May his revolutionary fervor live on!

Judge George W. Crockett, Jr.

Greetings on this long overdue celebration of a great singer, patroit, a folk-legend in his own time, and a rare symbol of the American dream.

Leonard Bernstein

I am happy to salute Paul Robeson on his 75th Birthday, one of the truly great spirits of our time.

Benjamin E. Mays, President Emeritus
Morehouse College

Dear Brother Robeson,

Between "Timing is everything," and "Better late than never," rest my feelings about your life and struggles.

You are an inspiration to "all of Us." In the days gone by and now, this, the Spring of '73, your courage is rare.

I'm only sorry that this event could not have happened 20 years ago because of "our" lack of courage.

All the best,
Arthur Ashe

Your prolific achievement, your singular leadership of mutual causes and your towering contribution to a better American way of life places you among the truly great of our nation.

J. Rupert Picott
Executive Director, The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History

The Musicians' Union of Great Britain sends warm and fraternal greetings to Paul Robeson, whose example in the struggles for racial equality and the rights and social advancement of working people everywhere have been an inspiration to us all.

His great artistic talent has brought joy to millions of the world's population, and we are proud to claim him as our first Honorary Life Member and as our friend.

Harry Francis
Assistant General Secretary

Here is the Valley of the Nile where men first lifted their eyes to the stars, we hail the day of your birth. Your life brings Peace on Earth and Goodwill to all men a little nearer.

Shirley Graham Dubois

When the notice came to me that a committee of distinguished citizens, many of whom I know personally, were planning to give a much deserved testimonial in honor of this great American, one of the greatest artists that God has given to this earth, how many memories of the past are called to my mind.

Along with the life of stellar accomplishment, as was Paul Robeson's, goes the obligation to make such facts available in the public record.

Of course, Raymond Pace Alexander and Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander consider it an honor to join this distinguished Committee in the SALUTE TO PAUL ROBESON, one of America's greatest vocalists and dramatic actors.

Judge Raymond Pace Alexander

The first thought that comes to mind on the 75th birthday of Paul Robeson is that he was born too soon. The opportunities which he would have had as a singer and actor of the highest order would have been much greater today than when he was bruised by the hard walls of prejudice as a young man. Not only our nation, but the whole world suffered a loss in that for too many of his years he was not accepted in his home and homeland as he should have been. Although I do not share his political position, I understand it fully and admire him for having dared to be the man of courage he always showed himself to be.

Eugene Carson Blake, Past President
National Council of the Churches of Christ
in the U.S.A.

To Paul Robeson:

Seventy-five years ago two great events took place. Paul Robeson was born, and the South Wales Miners Federation was formed. On your birthday the South Wales Miners greet you and pay tribute to you as a great man and champion of the people everywhere. Long may you live and long may you be happy.

From the South Wales Miners and Their
Families.[55]

The struggle for human dignity and equality is a worldwide one, and one generation builds upon the work of its predecessors. I am therefore happy to have this opportunity to pay tribute to Paul Robeson on his 75th Birthday.

Paul Robeson used his great abilities and great gifts for the service of all mankind. The manner of his doing so drew attention to the evils of oppression and inequality in his native America and in very many other parts of the world. He sang for the people, he expressed their longings with his wonderful voice: and then, with his whole being, Paul Robeson worked for the cause of humanity against the evils of discriminatory and oppressive societies.

> Paul Robeson provided an inspiration and an encouragement to his comrades in the struggle for justice and humanity. On behalf of all Tanzanians I pay tribute to him.
>
> Julius K. Nyerere
> President of Tanzania[56]

Robeson's friend and accompanist, Lawrence Brown, died in February, 1973. Robeson was unable to attend the Memorial Concert, February 11, 1973, but he sent a recorded message instead:

> ... Larry was my close friend and partner for forty years, and his passing is a great personal loss.
>
> I have often said that the creative musicianship of Lawrence Brown was from the outset an important influence on my singing career. It was he who clarified my instinctive feeling that the simple, beautiful songs of my childhood should become important concert material.
>
> ... Later, Larry's sensitive appreciation of the folk music of other peoples led me to include as concert material the folk songs of many other lands.
>
> In our sorrow, now that he is gone, let us remember that the creative works of Lawrence Brown will never die. Like the people's songs that endure from generation to generation, his artistic contributions will live on within our rich Afro-American cultural heritage and as part of the cultural heritage of all mankind.[57]

On January 23, 1976, Paul Leroy Robeson died. He laid his burden down, Climbed Jacob's Ladder, and went home to his Lord to be free.

FOOTNOTES

1. Paul Robeson, **Here I Stand**, Boston: Beacon Press, 1971, p. 15.
2. Ibid., p. 9.
3. Ibid., p. 13.
4. Ibid., p. 17.
5. Ibid., p. 19.
6. Ibid., p. 19.
7. Ibid., pp. 18-19.
8. Ibid., pp. 19-20.
9. Ibid., p. 25.
10. Ibid., p. 27.
11. Lamont H. Yeakey, "A Student Without Peer: The Undergraduate College Years of Paul Robeson," unpublished manuscript, Columbia University, 1971, pp.4-5.
12. Ibid., pp. 6-7.
13. Mary Ovington White, **Portraits in Color**, New York: Viking Press, 1927, pp. 207-209.
14. Yeakey, p. 14.
15. Ibid., p. 14.
16. Ibid., p. 15.
17. Ibid., p. 15.
18. Oral Interview with Mrs. Geraldine Bledsoe, March 1, 1978, in Detroit, Michigan.
19. Yeakey, p. 22.
20. Ibid., p. 21.
21. Ibid., p. 21.
22. Ibid., p. 28.
23. Nat Hentoff, "Paul Robeson: Scandalize My Name," **The Classics Record Library**, Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Book-of-the-Month Club, Inc., 1976, pp. 3-4.

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

24. Birthday Committee, Commemorative Program, **Salute to Paul Robeson, A Cultural Celebration of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday**, New York: April 15, 1973, no pagination; hereinafter cited as Commemorative Program.

25. Commemorative Program.

26. Loften Mitchell, "Time to Break the Silence Surrounding Paul Robeson?" **New York Times**, August 6, 1972.

27. Hentoff, p. 3.

28. Roberta Yancy Dent (ed.), **Paul Robeson Tributes**, New York: Paul Robeson Archives, Inc., 1976, p. 10.

29. Commemorative Program.

30. Alden Whitman, "Paul Robeson Dies at 77; Singer, Actor, and Activist," **New York Times**, January 24, 1976.

31. Commemorative Program.

32. Mitchell, Op. Cit.

33. Wright, p. 118.

34. Commemorative Program.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Whitman, **New York Times**, January 24, 1976.

38. Wright, p. 123.

39. Richard Hofstadter and Michael Wallace, (Editors), **American Violence: A Documentary History**, New York: Vintage Books, 1971, p. 365.

40. Loften Mitchell, **New York Times**, August 6, 1972.

41. Robeson, pp. 38-39.

42. Loften Mitchell, **New York Times**, August 6, 1972; Robeson, p. 40.

43. Robeson, p. 38; Eric Bentley (Editor), **Thirty Years of Treason**. Excerpts from Hearings Before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938-1968, New York: The Viking Press, 1971, p. 769.

44. Robeson, p. 29.

FOOTNOTES (Continued)

45. Bentley, p. 778.
46. Commemorative Program.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. **New York Herald Tribune**, December 24, 1963.
52. Robeson, pp. 117-118.
53. Ibid., p. V.
54. Hentoff, p. 4.
55. Commemorative Program.
56. Hentoff, p. 4.
57. Commemorative Program.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. Develop with the class an experience story based on the life of Paul Robeson.

2. Read with students a biography or other account of the life of Paul Robeson: Work with them to identify significant events in his life. Plan a bulletin board series of booklets illustrating these events with pupil drawings or with photographs.

3. On a map of the world, have students locate the countries where Robeson has visited and performed.

4. Discuss with students the kinds of behaviors they admired most in Paul Robeson and why.

5. Discuss with students the development of Paul Robeson's moral development.

6. Assist students in comparing and contrasting Paul Robeson with his contemporaries.

7. Speculate with students on how Paul Robeson would have participated in the civil rights revolution and Vietnam War Protest from 1963 - 1973 if he had not been ill and in retirement.

8. Develop with the class a film strip or slide presentation on significant events or periods of Robeson's life.

9. Discuss with students basic facts about Paul Robeson's life, his family, his activities and his importance to the people of the United States and the World.

10. Write an account of Paul Robeson's career as students that it might appear in a history text in 2008.

11. Develop student-made scrapbooks, slide presentations, tapes, and posters around the theme of Paul Robeson's life and times.

12. Assist students in comparing and contrasting films and plays of Paul Robeson with contemporary films and plays.

13. Develop the following historical terms with students and relate them to Paul Robeson's life and times. These concepts may be assigned also as reports, research projects, and panel discussions.

Fugitive Aid Society
Red Summer of 1919
U.S.O.
Double V
Anti-lynching Movement
Woodrow Wilson's Benign Neglect
Harlem Renaissance
Spanish Civil War
McCarthy Era
Sojourner Truth Controversy
H.U.A.C. — House Un-American Activities Committee

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES (Continued)

14. Develop the following concepts with students and relate them to Paul Robeson's life and times. These concepts may be assigned also as reports, research projects and panel discussions.

Institutional Racism	Irony
Genocide	Imperialism
Third World	**Persona Non Grata**
Separate but Equal	Unperson
Constitutional Rights	Motivation
Martyrdom	All American
Colonialism	Oral Tradition
Socialism	Nationalism
Communism	Anti Semiticism
Fascism	Role Model
Vigilantism	Renaissance Man

SUGGESTIONS FOR AN ALL-SCHOOL ACTIVITY

1. Present a series of tableaus researched and developed by students illustrating important moments in Paul Robeson's life.
2. Include in a program folk songs, spirituals, and other songs that Robeson sang. These songs could be used for group singing also.
3. Combine oral presentations with tableaus to emphasize Paul Robeson's concerns.
4. Using large group and small group instructional techniques show the film "Paul Robeson the Tallest Tree in our Forest" over a period of four days (1 reel per day) with appropriate pre and post viewing activities.

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DISCOGRAPHY

An Evening With Paul Robeson. The Afro-American Museum of Detroit.

Encore, Robeson! Volume II. Monitor.

Paul Robeson. Pattie Marconi.

Paul Robeson, A Man and His Beliefs. Averest.

Paul Robeson at Carnegie Hall, Volume I. Vanguard.

Paul Robeson at the Peach Arch Park — Blaine, Washington. Right Productions.

Paul Robeson: Ballad for Americans (Original Recording) and Carnegie Hall Concert, Volume II. Vanguard.

Paul Robeson: Favorite Songs, Volume I. Monitor.

DISCOGRAPHY (Continued)

Paul Robeson: In Live Performance. Columbia.

Paul Robeson: Scandalize My Name. The Classics Record Library.

Paul Robeson: Songs of Free Men and Spirituals. Columbia.

Paul Robeson: Songs of My People. R. C. A. Red Seal.

Robeson. Vanguard.

Salute to Robeson. Paul Robeson Archives, Inc.

The Best of Paul Robeson, Volume III. Starline.

The Essential Paul Robeson. Vanguard.

The Special Magic of Paul Robeson. Verve.

FILMS AND VIDEO TAPES

A Profile of Paul Robeson (1975), Video Cassette, 60 minutes.

Emperor Jones (1933), 80 minutes.

Jericho (1937), 75 minutes.

King Solomon's Mines (1938), 102 minutes.

Native Land (1942), 85 minutes.

Proud Valley (1939), 77 minutes.

Sanders of the River (1934), 80 minutes.

Showboat (1935), 108 minutes.

Song of Freedom (1936), 70 minutes.

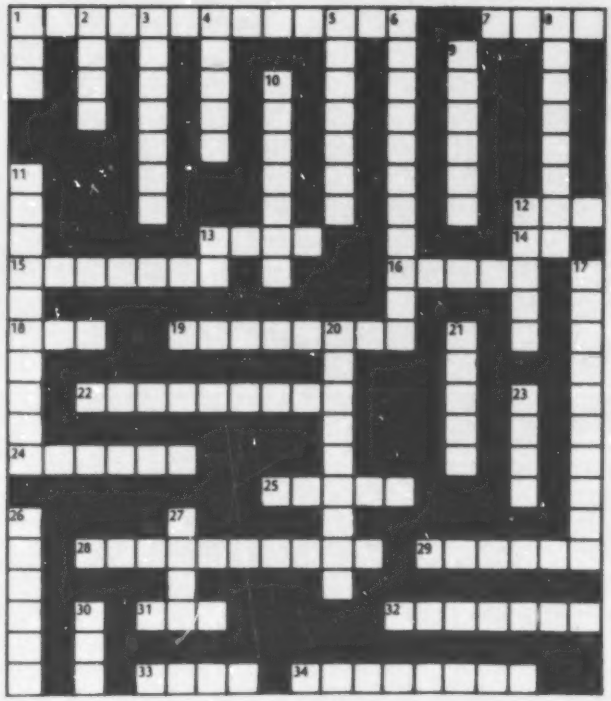
Tales of Manhattan (1942), 118 minutes.

The Tallest Tree in the Forest (1975), 90 minutes.

PAUL ROBESON CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Prepared for use in African History Clubs

By Roberta Hatten



ACROSS

1. Paul was an _____ figure.
7. He always did his _____.
12. Ole _____ River.
13. His _____ was hard.
14. **B**__ he fought on anyway.
15. _____ was his wife.
16. Paul earned many **h**_____
18. He had one _____.
19. He played the part of one of best _____ ever.
22. He was born in _____.
24. He was on the _____ team.
25. He also ran _____.
28. He faced many _____.
29. He became a _____ after leaving Columbia.
31. His father's title was _____.
32. He was an all around _____.
33. He was always _____ in whatever he did.
34. He played professional _____ to pay his way through Law School.

DOWN

1. His roots were with the _____ nation in Africa.
2. He played on the All American Football _____.
3. Paul _____.
4. He was an _____.
5. His ancestors were traced to the country of _____ in Africa.
6. He fought hard to organize _____ _____.
8. He sang in the musical _____.
9. One who sings songs.
10. He gave many _____.
11. His famous book _____ _____.
12. Songs and instruments are _____.
13. _____ are climbing Jacob's ladder.
17. He was a _____ of Civil Rights.
20. He spoke many _____.
21. His middle name was _____.
23. His first name was _____.
26. He had a magnificent _____.
27. He sang in the _____ club.
30. _____ Beta Kappa.

PAUL ROBESON WORD PUZZLE

Prepared for use in African History Clubs

By Roberta Hatter

Challenge
Here I stand
Nigeria
Forerunner
Languages
Athlete
Honors
Debate
Voice
Actor
Sister
Track
Work
Son
Showboat
Football
Champion
Emperor Jones
Glee Club
Rutgers

C I V I L R ! G H T S O B I
E C I O V E B U L C E G L G
I N T E R N A T I O N A L D
W O R K E N E X H Q C T A N
V I U A G U G Z P T I H N A
Z P T P N R N Q O E S E G T
E M G P I E E R T A U L U S
S A E A S R L E H M M E A I
L H R U S O L Y E A R T G E
A C S L O F A W L N E E E R
N S R O N O H A L B A P S E
D E B A T E C L O O D R H H
L A B O R O B E S O N S W I
B X P R I N C E T O N U B A
E Z Y O R E L L A B T O O F
S I S T E R N I G E R I A X
T R E C N O C Q K C A R T Z

Labor
Phi
Beta
Kappa
Man
U.S.S.R.
Music
Exlande
Reverend
Lawyer
Team
Read
Fair
Othello
Leroy
Princeton
Paul
Best
Ibo
Concert

PAUL WAS A CHAMPION DEBATER, TOO!

Prepared for use in African History Clubs

By Roberta Hatten

Discuss with your class what a debate is.

Use as a Team Activity:
1. Discuss rules (time)
2. Choose teams
3. Discuss topics
4. Evaluate points made

TOPICS FOR DEBATE

1. Football vs Basketball.

   — Paul earned letters in both sports. If you had the same ability, which sport would you play and why?
   — Things to consider:
      1. Drafting probabilities
      2. Salary
      3. Injury probabilities
      4. Longevity of participation

2. The five period day vs the six period day.

   — Recent issue confronting the Detroit Public School Middle Schools
   — Things to consider:
      1. Class schedules
      2. Extra school activities
      3. How free time is spent
      4. Did grades improve or not

3. Is College for everyone?

   — Paul attended college and even became a lawyer, however, his success in life was made in singing and acting, which he did not study in college
   — Things to consider:
      1. Job possibilities
      2. Possible salaries
      3. Job advancement

A SKIT — YOUNG PAUL

Prepared for use in African History Clubs

By Roberta Hatten

SCENE: Father and children are seated at table. Breakfast is being served by sister.

Father: But you must understand that you children must do your best in whatever you do.

Sister: But Daddy, what if you don't like doing it?

Father: Then Marion, you should try even harder. Whatever you do; do it well. Children I tell you somethings are hard, but if I hadn't done my best I might never have escaped from slavery.

Paul: But Daddy, we aren't in slavery.

Father: (Standing) — Oh Paul, you must never forget that you are and will be a Black Man in America and in order to overcome the barriers of America you **MUST** do good.

Children: O.K. Daddy, we'll do our best.

Paul: Daddy, do you remember the test paper I got last week?

Father: The one you got 90% on (shaking his head in disgust).

Paul: Yes, you know that was a good paper. Really Daddy, anything in the 90's is good.

Father: One hundred is the best Paul. If 90% is so good, then why do they even have a grade of 100%.

PAUL ROBESON STUDY SHEET

Listening Skill Builder

RECORD: "An Evening With Paul Robeson" (Introduction)

I needn't say what a great pleasure and what a deep privilege it is to be with you here. I'm not here to make a _____ tonight, I'm going mainly to _____, and maybe to _____ a poem or so a little later. So I just want to _____ you for coming out. I will now just go _____ and sing.

With just an added line: That I am very conscious of what's going on in many parts of the _____, I have given up a _____ to do what I am doing. I have been _____ by the _____ and affection of my own people.

No one can _____ them from stopping and shaking my hand and saying, "Stay in there, Paul!"

And there is no force on _____ that shall cause me to _____ one-thousandth part of an inch.

SUGGESTIONS: 1. Take out all verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc.

2. Use songs, take out key words.